Miles Wright

A Guide to Self Enquiry (Atma Vichara)

according to the teachings of Ramana Maharshi

collected writings

compiled and edited by

Gabriele Ebert

Free version for the Internet Archive

"Pursue the enquiry 'Who am I?' relentlessly," advised an Indian guru, Sri Ramana Maharshi. Analyse your entire personality. Try to find out where the I-thought begins. Go on with your meditations. Keep turning your attention within. One day the wheel of thought will slow down and an intuition will mysteriously arise. Follow that intuition, let your thinking stop and it will eventually lead you to the goal."

(James Hewitt: Teach yourself Yoga, p. 121)

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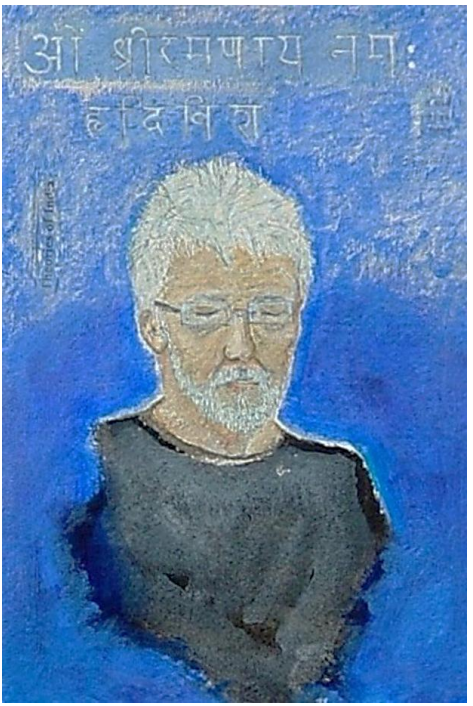
Introduction



Selfportrait
Sanskrit, first line: "om ramaNAya namaH",
Second line "hRdi viSa" – "Enter the Heart!"

Miles was a long-standing friend and companion. He died completely unexpectedly, but very peacefully, on 5 January 2026 at the age of 71, following a brain haemorrhage. Many years ago, I had the privilege of translating and publishing his annotated translation of Ramana Maharshi's 'Upadesa Saram' and 'Talks on Self Enquiry', and only recently, posthumously, I published a third book entitled 'More Talks on Self Enquiry'. Now, in his memory, this complete volume is being published, comprising these three books as well as further material and his Bachelor thesis on Bhartrhari's Vakyapadiya.

As a teenager, Miles came across Ramana Maharshi's path of self enquiry (*atma vichara*) in a book on yoga, and as this method of practice immedi-

ately made sense to him, he followed this path uncompromisingly to the end. That is why we will scarcely find anyone else who can speak so competently and with such experience about this path. His busy family and professional life never prevented him from practising *vichara*. He did so completely unobtrusively in all circumstances. He emphasised that one should practise it secretly, in everything one does, at work and in one's free time.

In 2001, he wrote in his blog: "Someone asked me the other day why I always pointed towards Sri Maharshi's teaching of *atma vichara*. The reason is simplicity itself. To participate, it does not matter where you live, whether male or female, young or old, what your culture is, what your status is, where you are, what you are doing. It does not need a set time or period of time to be effective. All that is needed is to pursue the question 'Who am I?' Do your duty/work, but keep attention focussed on the enquiry. If pursued properly the enquiry leads to the Heart centre, the true 'I-I-I'."

Miles was deeply committed to the truth throughout his life. He had a very close relationship with his father, whom he described as his 'first guru'. In a personal email, he once wrote to me: "I remember that my father took me aside when I was about 14 and said 'Miles, you must realise that things are not always black and white. There are grey areas.' My response was, 'But Dad, without Truth there is nothing!' It is funny really because my dedication to Truth was inspired by him. He was undoubtedly the most honest man I have ever known. He was a natural *karma yogi* without having heard of such a thing. My first Guru."

Miles was a family man and had two children and four grandchildren, of whom he was very proud. His family also included several animals such as dogs, parrots, cats, fish (and perhaps a few more).

Professionally, he had a very broad range of experience. After completing high school, he studied Business and Scottish law at college in Edinburgh. He then worked in his father's travel business before stepping out alone in the wholefoods sector. He initially ran a shop in North Berwick and later in Edinburgh. Following this venture, he worked in a variety of business management roles – in car sales, furniture sales and other retail environments including his own American sportswear store ahead of its time, always with a focus on good customer service. Alongside this work he was always un-

dertaking his independent studies of Sanskrit. Then he stopped working due to ill health and once recovering he embarked on his degree at the University of Edinburgh (BA in Sanskrit and Linguistics) to devote himself more fully to what he really wanted.

Miles's bachelor thesis dealt with Bhartrhari's Vakyapadiya. Bhartrhari was a 5th-century philosopher, linguist and grammarian. His philosophy is characterised by the concept of '*Sabdabrahman*' or '*Sabdapurvayoga*'. He postulated that language and realisation are interconnected and that one can attain spiritual liberation through an understanding of grammar, which Miles regarded as another expression of Ramana's teaching of *atma vichara*. He often referred to Bhartrhari.

In 1999, he founded the Ramana Maharshi Yahoo group to facilitate discussion about Ramana, as nothing of the sort existed on the internet at the time. During this period, seekers began to visit him or write to him. He felt increasingly pushed into the role of spiritual teacher, which he was not necessarily happy about, although he was an excellent teacher.

I joined his Yahoo group at the end of 1999. His group chats quickly made it clear to me that he was not one of the 'usual' Ramana followers, but truly practised 100 per cent what he wrote, had relevant experience and had something to say. My curiosity was piqued, and I wrote to him privately. As I had no particular travel plans for my summer holiday in 2002, I decided to visit Scotland, particularly the enchanting city of Edinburgh, and to 'take a look at him' for myself. We met there in a café. We never met again, but we corresponded actively via email and chat for 25 years – until shortly before his death. He became a helpful companion and a very good friend and assisted me with any ambiguities when I was translating 'Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi', Ramana's 'Collected Works' and other writings about Ramana.

The Yahoo group initially developed positively. I founded another one called 'Atma Vichara', dedicated to the path of self enquiry, and Miles became a member. Many interesting questions were asked, which he answered, and he wrote valuable and helpful posts, yet the more the groups grew, the more discord crept in. There were an increasing number of posts containing misinterpretations or dilutions of Ramana's teachings and pro-

moting *Advaita* teachers. This trend could not be stopped despite Miles's numerous admonitions and corrections; on the contrary, it intensified. His sharp criticism can be found in some of his posts. When it came to *atma vichara*, he was uncompromising.

Miles with his parrot Lulu

Miles' painting of his dog Midge with Ball

These constant admonitions wore him down, and as they had no effect, it seemed pointless to him to continue running the groups, especially as there were now several other Yahoo groups dedicated to Ramana Maharshi. Moreover, he was increasingly struggling with health problems and suffered from various conditions such as the autoimmune disease Hashimoto's encephalitis, arthritis, and a range of eye, skin (psoriasis), heart, mobility, memory and neurological issues, and was no longer able to manage his role as a moderator. Although his health was often a cause for concern, he never complained, but accepted both the good and the bad in equal measure. When asked how he was, he would report on everything quite matter-of-factly, sometimes almost as if he were talking about someone else.

In 2006, he deleted his group and left the Atma-Vichara group, which was also deleted after some time. He attempted a fresh start several times with various new groups and forums (The Sage of Arunachala, Acalayoga, etc.), but it was always the same. Subsequently, he set up several blogs that no longer allowed such discussions, but he always remained open to staying in touch with those who wished to do so and to participating in meaningful discussion.

Miles loved nature, rock music and playing the guitar. He was also an artist. When his illnesses made it difficult for him to paint with colours, he created digital artworks. His paintings ranged from realistic to abstract. He said: "I'm not sure if I have a style at all. It seems to change every time I sit down at the easel." He liked to experiment and play with colours and different styles. Sometimes he painted just for fun. Occasionally, he incorporated Sanskrit words or quotations into his pictures. Just as I have collected his writings, I have also collected his paintings and included several of them in this book that go well with the texts.

There are repetitions that I have left in. The spelling of some Sanskrit terms is not always consistent. I have cross-checked some sources and added a glossary and a bibliography. I have also added a few explanations in footnotes and square brackets.

In addition, two of his close friends – Suri Suryanarayan from India, who also corresponded with him for many years, and David Moses, a friend from his university days – have enriched this book with their memories, for which

I am very grateful to them. Special thanks also go to Miles' daughter, Rohana Payne, who has contributed a number of biographical details and photographs.

I chose 'A Guide to Self Enquiry' as the title of the book because this collection of Miles's writings really does make for an excellent guide to this path. Miles makes it clear that *atma vichara* is not merely a spiritual exercise to be performed at a specific time of day, but a practice that should continue throughout the day (and even throughout the night) and indeed become a way of life. And it can begin here and now.

Gabriele Ebert

Miles Wright –
My Spiritual Guiding Light

by Suri Suryanarayan

Miles

About thirty years ago, while searching for a chat group on Advaita I found a Yahoo group on Ramana Maharshi. I applied to join the group introducing myself as a fellow Ramana devotee. I received a warm welcoming message from the owner of the group. Thus began my momentous association with Sri[1] Miles Wright.

I soon learned that Sri Miles had significant health concerns to deal with. He asked me to manage the Ramana Maharshi Yahoo group whenever he was preoccupied with attending to treatment of his medical condition. I was also having private chats and exchanging mails with Sri Miles outside the group. I found every word he wrote was profound and had a powerful spiritual impact on me. Sri Miles became a familiar name amongst my close relatives and friends. It was not uncommon for my daughter, then a high school student to comment, when she found me in an exuberant mood, "Oh, you seem to have received an email from Sri Miles!" My wife and daughter cherish the telephonic conversations they have had with him. It was my wife's desire to visit Sri Miles and his family. It will remain an unfulfilled desire. Some of my friends and colleagues who went to Edinburgh on work made sure to visit him. They came back and reported to me the spiritually elevating experience of visiting Sri Miles.

Once I was planning to go to Tiruvannamalai, the temple town in South India to spend a few days in Sri Ramana Ashram[2] and do a Girivalam[3] round the sacred Arunachala[4] Hill. I wrote to Sri Miles to be present with me mentally while I do the Girivalam. He wrote back saying "For me, Girivalam is constant." It was then that I realized that Sri Miles was no ordinary human being.

On another occasion, while in Ramana Ashram in Tiruvannamalai, I resolved to do a Girivalam and pray intensely to Arunachala to cure Sri Miles of his bodily ailments. This strong sense of doership behind my prayer to Arunachala before I started the Girivalam had completely dissolved by the time I completed the Girivalam. In fact during the entire duration of five hours covering the distance of about 14 kilometers round the hill from 4 AM to 9 AM, my mind was absolutely still and no thought arose. Sacred Arunachala made His message clear to me in thundering silence that all actions by the body and the mind (even those driven by desire) happen by divine sanction. So also, the fruits of these actions are ordained by the divine. The very first verse of Upadesa Saram of Ramana Maharashi makes this amply clear.

The impact of Sri Miles' words was felt not only by me but also by many others in the Ramana Maharshi Yahoo group. Many of us made plans to go to Edinburgh and meet him. Sister Gabriele visited him much before I could.

My cousin Murali who has been travelling to the United Kingdom several times on business visited Sri Miles twice and spent time with him at his residence in Edinburgh. I recall Murali's excited phone call immediately after his first visit to Sri Miles in 2002. He said Sri Miles' residence reminded him of Mandala Misra[5] in whose house parrots discussed Vedanta. Sri Miles also had two parrots and a MaCaw by the name Lulu in his house. Lulu was quite possessive of Sri Miles and when he was engaged in discussions on the Upadesa of Ramana Maharshi with visitors to his house, Lulu used to fly and sit on his shoulder chanting "Ramana, Ramana …" as though participating in the discussion. I had firsthand experience of this when I visited Sri Miles in Edinburgh in the year 2005. Sri Miles' wife, daughter and son were devoted to him. Later when his children got married, Sri Miles' grandchildren who called him Appa[6] were equally attached to him. His family is truly a blessed one.

My email exchanges with Sri Miles covered various subjects that included queries/doubts in the meaning of slokas in Sanskrit, import of sacred mantras etc. His replies were always profound. Once, while discussing the significance of the Pranava mantra (Om or Aum) he wrote:

Om: in brief, a Sacred exclamation. However much more could and has been written about it. We might discuss this again if you wish. It comes up often in my interest and teaching of Sabdapurvayoga[7].

When requested to elucidate further on the Pranava Mantra, he wrote:

Sri Bhagavan[8] has said that "In the sphere of speech Pranava (the mystic sound of AUM) represents the transcendental (nirguna) and the Panchakshari (the five-syllabled mantra) represents the immanent aspect (saguna)." (from Talk 218)

To truly understand AUM is to dwell in the Self, one without another. All sequence evolves from this. AUM is not, and requires no, communication. However, communication exists as potential in AUM. AUM = Brahman. (The screen is paramount, without it the film fails to unfold.) AUM is the subtle word within. From AUM all words become manifest. To AUM all words return.

AUM is the Universal. The Universe, with its infinite number of phenomena reliant on time and space, is nothing without AUM. AUM is the source of all

communication, yet reliant on none. AUM, as vAk, evolves as this universe, with experiencers, the experience and the experienced. The apparent evolution of the kArakas (those relations which accomplish actions) are resolved in AUM. AUM is the sound of my Self. When the myriad forms disappear, AUM remains, as always, as Reality. (When the ornaments disappear, gold remains.) The relative universe resolves into something much wider. This is AUM. This is the Self. This is Ramana. The Self of All. aum aum aum namo bhagavate srI ramanAya

Ever Yours in Sri Bhagavan,

Miles

I am indeed blessed to have received several such mails from Sri Miles elaborating the true import of many Upadesas of Ramana Maharshi.

On 31 December 2025 we sent to him a New Year Greeting, in true Scottish style as under:

Wishing all members of the extended Buckstone[9] family

A GUID HOGMANAY!

And we promptly received his response on 1 January 2026 as under:

Thank you very much Bhavani and Suri,

And a very good 2026 to you and yours.

Miles ॐ

We never realized that he would leave the body four days later.

Getting to know Sri Miles, interacting with him and receiving his words of great spiritual import for three decades has indeed been a great blessing. He has been and will always be my Spiritual Guiding Light.

Srinivasan (Suri) Suryanarayan

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[1] Sri – a Sanskrit term that serves primarily as a title of respect and veneration.

[2] Sri Ramana Ashram– A hermitage at the foot of Arunachala Hill in Tiruvannamalai where Ramana Maharshi lived till 1950. It houses the tomb of Ramana Maharshi and his mother and is a place of reverence and worship attracting a large number of devotees every day.

[3] Girivalam – Derived from the Tamil words *giri* (hill/mountain) and *valam* (going around clockwise), it specifically refers to the sacred ritual of walking around the Arunachala hill.

[4] Arunachala Hill – Arunachala translates to "Red Mountain" or "Hill of Wisdom." In Sanskrit, *Aruna* means "red" or "bright like fire" and *Achala* signifies "hill". The hill is located in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, India.

[5] Mandala Misra – Mandala Misra engaged in and lost a debate with Adi Shankara and later became one of Shankara's foremost disciples and was known by his monastic name Sureshvaracharya.

[6] Appa – a warm, colloquial term of endearment for one's father. In many Eastern spiritual philosophies "Appa" is used to address the Supreme Being.

[7] *Sabdapurvayoga* – Refer to the chapter of Sabdapurvayoga in this volume.

[8] *Sri Bhagavan* – Ramana Maharshi is often referred as Sri Bhagavan by his devotees.

[9] Buckstone – The locality in Edinburgh where Sri Miles resided and where his children grew up. Buckstone family refers to the families of Sri Miles and his children.

No Animal Others:
In Honour of Miles Wright

by David Moses

Miles Wright

Dr David Moses met Miles Wright when he began life at Edinburgh University as a mature student. After his first degree, in English Literature, David continued to teach there and to research for his PhD in medieval literature: *Writing Animals, Speaking Animals: The Displacement and Placement of the Animal in Medieval Literature*. In 2005 he became Teacher of English at Ampleforth College. During his time at Ampleforth he was Head of Music

Scholars, Housemaster of St John's House, and Head of School at the college's prep school St Martin's Ampleforth. After setting up and running Ampleforth's Junior House St Edward's and Wilfrid's, he became Ampleforth's Head of Careers and Higher Education. He moved to The Oratory School, Reading, in 2023 as Assistant Head with responsibility for the Sixth Form. He continues to teach English and to research, to explain, and to inspire students to read medieval literature.

Here is the article he wrote in memory of Miles for this book:

***

I look back at my doctoral thesis and realise now that I have thanked Miles in my acknowledgements not for his support, but for his inspiration.

I met miles as I began life at Edinburgh University and as we both spent a year on a course (1996) allowing us via a final exam to access our university degree courses (1997). We were both mature students, though he older than I. We both knew our choice of degree, and we instantly got along without having to work too hard at friendship. He had always wanted to study Sanskrit and had read widely and in depth before ever starting at university. Around 2000, as we finished our MA Honours degrees (mine in English) our relationship changed. In the September I transitioned from undergraduate to researching for my doctorate, and to teaching in Edinburgh's Department of English. At this time, we met more frequently, away from the campus, and once, occasionally twice a week for a couple of hours – sometimes for much longer. I completed my PhD in 2004, but I continued to teach at the university part time until I moved to a school in England in 2005. Miles and I continued to meet, and the remarkable thing was that we met every week.

Did we sit and speak in earnest terms of profound philosophies? Not always. I would speak of my research, we chatted about pop culture, our family lives, and cars were always a topic of conversation. Miles adored Formula One racing. Our discussions were broad ranging, but in quick swings of topic we often made our way back to that key discussion, which was about the truth of non-dualism. My PhD on medieval literature took issue with the way earlier Christian thought negotiated the animal, and I mapped and explained in my thesis a discomfort about the animal which medieval literatures can re-

veal. I started to see that in some ways, though it is ineluctably non-dualist, Christianity had somehow lost touch with the full force of what earlier philosophers had asserted; a non-dualistic concern that animals have inherent value as subjects of the creator, also embodying His attributes. Miles had clearly articulated something which allowed me to see more clearly and which I would call 'presence'. He articulated too something more disturbing, uplifting, releasing: *Advaita Vedanta* (अद्वैतवेदान्त) or as he would introduce it to me 'non-dualism end of all knowledge'.

Miles was passionate about the truth, and he spoke his truth and spoke the Truth. One of his most cutting observations to close any philosophical, academic or everyday discussion was: "that's all just mind-stuff: the mind appears then disappears." Miles was a good teacher. He was good with analogy. I started better to understand consciousness through his notion that human beings are a surface without a plane – intriguing! Miles also described awaking in the morning as the moment when one shifts from being 'a surface without circumference' to an entity with boundaries, and therefore an entity bound within limited perspectives and experience. Our mind at waking expands to the extent – or limits – of our knowledge. But it is just mind. It is not that unmanifest Self, which may not be evident but which is all things. So long as you identify with a particular mind which, in Miles' terms 'pops up' and then dissipates, so long as you identify as a person with the constraints of body, you will continue to have all of its limits and limen, a literal being of limited perspective and subject to illusion. Understand rather, that you are not the body. You are not even the mind; you are the awareness in which these things appear.

Most lucid was Miles's grasp of the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharishi (1879 – 1950), lauded more reverently as Sri Bhagavan. Miles understood the non-dualism of the teaching 'be as you are' and Sri Bhagavan's more pressing interrogative: *who am I?* That non-dualism, as indicated by Sri Bhagavan, eschews conditioned experience. If we say 'I see a tree' we believe in an 'I' which believes it is experiencing something separate from itself. We create a disparity where none exists, between perceiver and perceived. This is a mistake, says Sri Bhagavan, because we are not looking at

the underlying 'I' that experiences things.[1] Rather, the world before us is a projection of the one who sees it – just like a film projected onto the screen of consciousness. We are the screen onto which the drama unfolds, and not the suffering characters of its tragedies. Later, Miles told me of Henri le Saux's encounters with Sri Bhagavan and of that Benedictine monk's engagement with self-enquiry. I read for myself that the 'authorship' which governs us 'cannot be divided into two – God and myself.'[2] Le Saux's understanding ultimately is that: *There is no room in me for God and for me at the same time. If there is a god, I am not; if there is me, how could God be?*[3] In other words: if God exists and I exist, we cannot be separate in the same moment.

How did I respond to this? Without forcing thought, I certainly applied ideas about this truth and non-duality to my work. The medieval mind was passionate about the Truth, though its idea of evidence was different to ours, and it articulated that truth through its art and literature. I picked out quickly those lucid understandings of non-dualism which appear everywhere implicitly, though explicitly in works such as *The Cloud of Unknowing* (late 14th c.). It is a text which focuses on God as a pure entity, beyond any capacity of mental conception and without any definitive form. The writer of that text insists that God cannot be reached by thought, but only through direct awareness which transcends the 'cloud' of worldly affairs, ideas, and thoughts which cloud one's ability to experience the divine. This approach is very similar to *Advaita* because it states the imminence of an unmanifest God, while showing God to be beyond the angle of our earthly vision, above our sense of subject and object(s), and beyond our sense of our self. Ineluctably non-dualistic, for the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* there is 'not two' in time and space.[4] At the 'divine' level of interpretation the crucial question is, how far medieval mysticism may properly be described as theocentric, or

[1] Godman, D., (ed.) Be As You Are: The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi (London: Penguin Arkana) 1985, p. 41.
[2] Oldmeadow, H, (ed.) A Christian Pilgrim in India: The Spiritual Journey of Swami Abhishiktananda (Henri Le Saux), (Indiana: World Wisdom Inc.) 2008, p. 45.
[3] Diary, 24 January 1949, in Stuart, J (ed.) Swami Abhishiktananda: His Life Told through his Letters (Delhi: ISPCK), 2000, p. 29.
[4] Underhill, E., (ed.) The Cloud of Unknowing: The Classic of Medieval Mysticism, (New York: Dover Press) 1912, 1923, p. 9.

God-centred? Ultimately, of course it is. A God of all being is, by definition, the centre of the universe and present in all its things; nothing has existence outside of His essence.

It is wrong to try to see one spiritual belief or perspective through the lens of another religious or philosophical tradition, but I did make connections between different paradigms, and I could see that absolute truth must be universal. Again, Miles introduced me to the most important notion in my learning, and one he saw as cognate with *Advaita*. That is the theological idea of Kenosis (Κένωσις); the idea of 'emptying out', that God poured himself into all creation and remains present in and inseparable from it. This informed in part the writing of the second chapter of my PhD, which explains the way in which medieval animals, mythical or hybrid animals, and man as an animal, were perceived by medieval commentators as inseparable from God. It is a non-duality akin to Julian of Norwich's (*c*. 1343 – *c*.1416) understanding of God as the substance of all being, and her revelation of the Divine presence not just in the tree, the grass, and our breath, but in all consciousness.[1] There can be no disparity between the creator and the created. Things not only signify God's intentions, they embody him. Sir Bhagavan, of course, would say that mind is attached to the world through a body, but that this leads to a false perspective. If you see something separate from yourself there is a disparity, a mistake, in your thought. If everything you see you know to be yourself and not sperate from you 'out there'. This is the right perspective.

Ultimately, this understand took me, in the western medieval paradigm, to define 'illumination' by better understanding St Augustine of Hippo's (354 – 430) understanding. Augustine said that after the fall from the Garden of Eden the things and signs of the world no longer signified God's intention; however, we could or can find illumination by looking within. By faith, understanding of the truth could be attained. Augustine's thoughts may be summed up by the word interiority or inwardness.[2] Interiority for Augustine

[1] Writing Animals, Speaking Animals: The Displacement and Placement of the Animal in Medieval Literature. Available as a Pdf file at the Edinburgh Research Archive (ERA) https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/8364

[2] Moses, D., 'A tough nut to crack: Robert Henryson's nut and kernel metaphor', in "Joyous Sweit Imaginatioun": Essays in Honour of R. D. S. Jack, ed. by Sarah

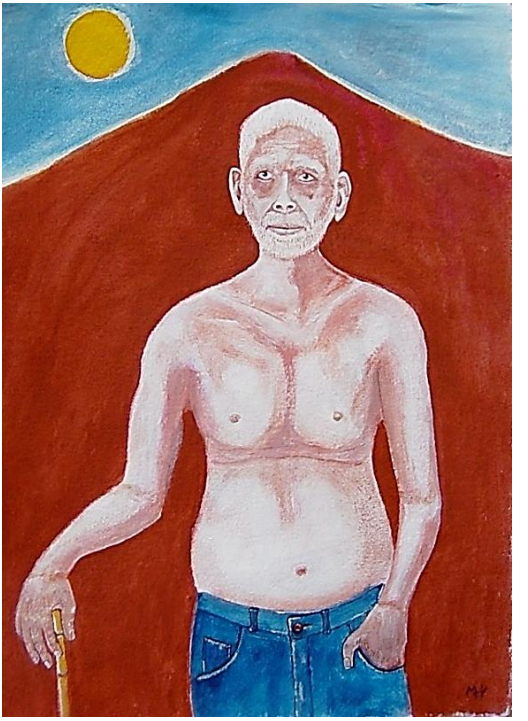
encompasses three interrelated concepts: the inner self, inward turns or revolution, and outward signs as expressions of inner things. His thought establishes the concept of the self as a private, though densely populated, inner space. To find and realise that there must be a personal revolution and illumination by which we turn into this inner space to look for and find God: "I entered even into mine own inwards […] and saw […] the unchangeable light of the Lord." [1]

My words are a 'thank you', Miles, for those important and generous discussions about literature, animals, Sanskrit and sages. Ultimately, I am in constant gratitude for what seems the most complex notion but which I know to be the simplest. It is an understanding which should disperse any perceptual distance between my notion of myself and of those creatures around me. Miles allowed me to understand that the question 'Who am I?' is not really meant to receive an answer; it is meant to dissolve the questioner into the most profound truth there is – 'I am that'.

M. Dunnigan & Sarah Carpenter, Scroll Scottish Literature Series vol. 9, (Amsterdam: Rodopi Press 2007) p 65.

[1] St Augustine. 1912. *Confessions* (tr. W. Watts). 2 vols. London: W. Heinmann. 10 17.

Ramana Maharshi as a Living Teacher



Maharshi in Blue Jeans,
acrylic paint on Khadi, handmade rag paper from Southern India, 2009

The Maharshi's *vichara* teaching transcends culture, time and place
and has universal validity.
"There is no difference between matter and spirit.
Modern science admits that all matter is energy."

(Ramana Maharshi in Talk 268[1])

[This was the response of Miles to a post on the Ramana Maharshi group about living and dead teachers. It was not intended to become an article.]

[1] Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi

"I have a living teacher. Many seekers do not."

This is something that's been written about on numerous occasions. I trust you will be patient as it seems pertinent to write about it again. I also have a 'living' teacher, His name is Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

The living versus dead controversy seems to be a fundamental misunderstanding (certainly fundamental in my *sadhana*) of the philosophy of Sri Ramana Maharshi. If I could relate a little of my own sadhana regarding this.

When I was a child I came across the name of Ramana Maharshi in a book about yoga. While I began to practice hatha yoga, (with relative ease, and to the amusement of my parents) the mere name 'Ramana Maharshi' set up waves of joy which seemed to permeate my entire being. In the book there is only one paragraph about the Sage, but this one paragraph sufficed to leave its mark (linga):

"Pursue the enquiry "Who am I?" relentlessly," advised an Indian guru, Sri Ramana Maharshi. 'Analyse your entire personality. Try to find out where the I-thought begins. Go on with your meditations. Keep turning your attention within. One day the wheel of thought will slow down and an intuition will mysteriously arise. Follow that intuition, let your thinking stop and it will eventually lead you to the goal."

Interestingly the book was called "Teach Yourself Yoga", by James Hewitt. While I read this paragraph over and over again, I never knew, nor did I consider, His status was anything other than alive. Although It was not possible to travel to see Him, as I was only 13 and living in Scotland, I did consider finding out where He lived with a view to travelling as soon as I was independent.

Some months later, as my small Yoga Library began to take shape, the realisation "He was dead" came about (after reading Paul Brunton perhaps). It was initially traumatic. But very soon I began to understand that the Teaching (as revealed in the paragraph above) was none other than Bhagavan Himself, and That had had a profound effect. It was some years before I eventually contacted the Ashram and purchased Talks, and other publications. During this time *vichara* continued unabated. I met various yogis and

spiritual teachers of the time (early 70s) but none seemed to offer any teaching which hit directly at the Heart of the matter, as the paragraph above did.

Vichara became *sadhana*. *Sadhana* was *vichara*. While in the early years it was limited to a certain time and place, very soon it became the primary occupation of mind throughout the working day as well. Bhagavan's vivid Teaching occupied my entire life. Even a glance at His photo drove the mind deep inwards (*bhaktirasa*).

Various plans were made to travel to Arunachala, on various occasions. I worked in the travel business so there was really no problem organising the trip at very reasonable rates to suit budget. Each time arrangements were made, catastrophe struck in the form of illness or death in the family. So the trip to Arunachala was never physically completed. However, in my mid 20s, in effect, Sri Arunachala came to me. I changed my type of work and place of work. Every morning as I travelled towards this new place of work a solitary hill was visible for quite a few miles prior to arrival in the town. It occurred to me that this was none other than Arunachala, itSelf. Since that moment all hills reminded me of Arunachala and immediately forced the mind inwards. (There are more, many more such stories and 'strange' happenings as those who visit know.)

Bhagavan was a *jivanmukta*. So why this confusion about "living"?

A friend recently sent me a book, ‘Surpassing Love and Grace’ An offering from His devotees. In it Chadwick says, "The whole mistake is initial, in the interpretation they put on the word *jivanmukta*; or in what they think a *jnani* really is and how he functions. When it is found that a jivanmukta is already absorbed in the Infinite and that for him the apparent change he undergoes is no change at all, there should be no more misapprehension. There is no further step for a jnani to take; he lost all sense of doership or association with a particular body when he finally knew himself to be *jnani*. The physical death is only just a happening in the myriad strange happenings in maya. He was in no way limited to a body while it was functioning. It was there, one might almost say, for us. We needed something that we could see, somebody who could speak to us. Now we must get along without the comfort of the physical presence, but it does not mean Bhagavan has gone anywhere, indeed, as he said himself: 'Where could I go? I am always here.’" (p. 260)

The Ashram remains for those who still feel the need to travel to it. The Ashram publications reveal the teachings. Guru stands resplendent as Sri Arunachala. To quote Chadwick again, "To what after all, did his spoken instructions amount? There is only one Self. You are that. Amplifying it slightly it becomes: there is nothing to do, nothing to seek. There is only false identification with limitation to discard and that is done by concentration on the eternal witness, the One behind all phenomena. Know who you are and there is no more to know." (p. 261) And this is also the instruction revealed (above) to the young lad reading his first book on Yoga.

From Ramana Mahashi, Talk 434:

D.: "*Sadguru* is necessary to guide me to understand it."

M.: "The *Sadguru* is within."

D.: "I want a visible Guru"

M.: That visible Guru says that He is within

D.: "Can I throw myself at the mercy of the *Sadguru*?"

M.: "Yes. Instructions are necessary only so long as one has not surrendered oneself. This is the Truth. Of that there is absolutely no doubt."

Self Enquiry according to Ramana Maharshi

Vichara

‘Who am I?’ is a wonderful text. Ramana Maharshi always insisted it be made available as cheaply as possible. Now we can all download it for free. Wonderful. It contains all one needs to know about the background to, and the practice of, *vichara* (Self Enquiry).

"*Vichara* is the process and the goal also. ‘I AM’ is the goal and the final Reality. To hold to it with effort is *vichara*. When spontaneous and natural it is Realisation." (Talk 390)

***

There is an oft quoted but, it seems, seldom read passage, in Ramana Maharshi's ‘Who Am I?’.

Everything you need to know about the practice of Self Enquiry is contained in the following few lines.

11. What is the means for constantly holding on to the thought 'Who am I?'

When other thoughts arise, one should not pursue them, but should inquire: "To whom do they arise?" It does not matter how many thoughts arise. As each thought arises, one should inquire with diligence, "To whom has this thought arisen?". The answer that would emerge would be "To me". Thereupon if one inquires "Who am I?", the mind will go back to its source; and the thought that arose will become quiescent. With repeated practice in this manner, the mind will develop the skill to stay in its source. When the mind that is subtle goes out through the brain and the sense organs, the gross names and forms appear; when it stays in the heart, the names and forms disappear. Not letting the mind go out but retaining it in the Heart is what is called "inwardness" (*antarmukha*). Letting the mind go out of the Heart is known as "externalisation" (*bahirmukha*).[1] Thus, when the mind stays in the Heart, the 'I' which is the source of all thoughts will go, and the Self which ever exists will shine. Whatever one does, one should do without the egoity "I". If one acts in that way, all will appear as of the nature of Siva (God).

12. Are there no other means for making the mind quiescent?

Other than inquiry, there are no adequate means. If through other means it is sought to control the mind, the mind will appear to be controlled, but will again go forth.

Regarding this, there is a question which is often asked - "what happens after I've asked the question 'who am I?'" The answer is there, in the passage above. There is no need to go off here, there and everywhere asking what to do next. "It does not matter how many thoughts arise. As each thought arises, one should enquire with diligence: "To whom has this thought arisen?" This re-asserts *vichara* mode.

Ramana Maharshi's simple instruction coupled with his statement "it does not matter how many thoughts arise," negates any need to go looking for further instruction. The very thought "now what happens" needs *vichara* attention. The thought "OK, I've done that" needs *vichara* attention. The idea "I'm still waiting!" – as soon as one registers it, needs *vichara* attention. If

[1] See explanation of the word '*murkham*' at the end of the chapter.

the mind drifts and the drift does not register, do not worry, re-commence *vichara* when one becomes aware of any obtrusive thought. If one becomes angry, who is angry? If one registers sadness, who is sad? If one registers a semblance of happiness, who is happy? etc.

Ramana Maharshi advises: "There is confusion between the means and the end (i.e., *sadhana* and *sadhya*). Who is the enquirer? The aspirant and not the *siddha*. Enquiry signifies that the enquirer considers himself separate from enquiry.

So long as this duality lasts the enquiry must be continued, i.e., until the individuality disappears and the Self is realised to be only the eternal Be-ing (including enquiry and enquirer). The Truth is that Self is constant and un-intermittent Awareness. The object of enquiry is to find the true nature of the Self as Awareness. Let one practise enquiry so long as separateness is perceived.

If once realisation arises there is no further need for enquiry. The question will also not arise. Can awareness ever think of questioning who is aware? Awareness remains pure and simple.

The enquirer is aware of his own individuality. Enquiry does not stand in the way of his individual awareness; nor does external work interfere with such awareness. If work, seemingly external, does not obstruct the individual awareness, will the work, realised to be not separate from the Self, obstruct the uninterrupted Awareness of the Self, which is One without a second and which is not an individual separate from work?" (Talk 454)

A note to the word '*mukham'*

The word '*mukham'* where appropriate, is, indeed, translated as 'face', but there are other nuances which pertain especially well when we talk of *vichara*. We often find it referring to 'mouth' or 'entrance' or 'opening' and it is often used like '*Adi'* to mean 'beginning with' (this is often translated as 'etcetera'), another nuance is 'original cause'.

With regard to the phrases '*bahirmukham'* and '*antarmukham'* the surface translation might, indeed, be 'facing out' or 'facing in' or perhaps 'with mind facing out', etc. This in itself is interesting because another nuance of

'*mukham'* is 'direction': 'inner direction', 'outer direction'. If we hold the other aspects in mind in the light of Bhagavan's teaching on *vichara*, this all comes together. The outward looking 'I' is the beginning of the created universe. 'I' look out and through the use of the *kArakas* (i.e. the attribution of roles and the separation of 'myself' from everything else) measure (*maya*) and explain (incidentally '*mukha-ra'* means 'talkative') what 'I' see.

However, when 'I' don't look out, but rather turn within searching for the source of this 'I', there is no beginning, but rather an end to 'my' creation. At this point we might consider the 'entrance' aspect of '*mukham'*. This is where 'I' stands at all times. The creation 'I' perceives is perceived from here. There is no movement for 'I'. 'I' dwells at the threshold, the entrance of the Heart. If 'I' turn one way, the fascination with the wonders of creation disguise the continuous murmur of the Heart; if 'I' turn the other, *sphurana* is unavoidable and 'I' is drowned out completely. '*mukham'* is indeed an interesting word.

Essence of Ramana Maharshi's Teaching

In the second chapter of Sri Ramana Gita, Sri Bhagavan[1] gives, in four lines of Sanskrit, the essence of His teaching.

hrdayakuharamadhye kevalam brahmamAtram
hyahamahamiti sAkshAdAtmarupeNa bhAti |
hrdi viSa manasA svam cinvatA majjatA vA
pavanacalanarodhAdAtmanishTho bhava tvam ||

(Ramana Gita, 2. 2)

In the inmost core, the Heart Shines as *Brahman* alone,
As 'I-I', the Self aware.
Enter deep into the Heart
By searching for Self, or diving deep,
Or with breath under check.
Thus abide ever in *Atman*.

[1] Ramana Maharshi was referred to as 'Bhagavan' by his devotees. 'Bhagavan' means 'the Exalted One', 'God' or 'Lord', and is often used as a term of respect for a self-realised person. 'Sri' is a common title of honour used when addressing or speaking of a person of high standing.

(This English translation was given by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.) The verse reveals the Self and three methods for the Realisation of the Self which encompass *Jnana*, *Bhakti* and Yoga.

hrdayakuharamadhye kevalam brahmamAtram

In the interior cave of the Heart, *Brahman* alone shines,
no more – no less.

This Heart is the seat of the Self. This Heart is none other than *Brahman*. You are always in the Heart. You are, indeed, this Heart. This is the Self. In truth, the Self is without location, but in order to help the *sadhaka* and to give direction, in His compassion, Sri Bhagavan has pointed us towards the middle of our being.

The Heart is not physical; it is spiritual. *Hridayam* = hrit + ayam = This is the centre. It is that from which thoughts arise, on which they subsist and where they are resolved. The thoughts are the content of the mind and, they shape the universe. The Heart is the centre of all.

“Yatova imani bhutani jayante (that from which these beings come into existence) etc. is said to be *Brahman* in the Upanishads. That is the Heart. *Brahman* is the Heart.” (Talk 97)

“This space within the Heart is as vast as the (physical) space outside. Indeed, within it are both heaven and earth; fire and air; sun and moon; lightning and stars. Whatever is in this world and whatever is not, all that is established within it.” (Chandogya Upanishad, 8.1.3)

hyahamahamiti sAkshAdAtmarupeNa bhAti |

As ‘I’, as ‘I’, the Self aware; Self-evidently shining. Continuous and uninterrupted.

D.: “What is the Heart?”

M.: “It is the seat (if such could be said of it) of the Self.”

D.: “Is it the physical heart?”

M.: “No. It is the seat wherefrom 'I' - 'I' arises.” (Talk 52)

Can we recognise/experience the Self in the body? Yes we can. *Atma vichara* is the key. Once unlocked the 'I' - 'I' consciousness shines forth directly, unobstructed.

hrdi viSa manasA svam cinvatA majjatA vA
pavanacalanarodhAdAtmanishTho bhava tvam ||

Enter the heart by questing mind, diving deep, or with breath controlled. Thus abide in Self.

How do we submerge the mind in the Heart?

Three methods are suggested: Quest for Self: This is *jnana*. Diving deep: This is *bhakti*. Attraction of/to the Self with or without attributes. Breath control: This is the path of Yoga.

In essence, all three are resolved in the action of *atma vichara*, Self Enquiry.

"Thus abide ever in *Atman*."

Vichara Practice

Noticing the to-ing and fro-ing of the mind, the vigilant one immediately practices *vichara*. But the quieted mind, having no distractions, has no need to practice. (cf. Ashtavakra Samhita, Chapter 18, stanza 17)

Equanimity is Yoga

It is the universe in its diversity which is generally spoken of as reality. The pairs of opposites (*dvandvas*) vie for our attention. Good/bad, hot/cold, rich/poor, spiritual/material etc., we give our attention to all of these in order to make judgements on their relative merits. They are the all-important opposites. All important because without them the universe as we 'know' it would collapse into Unity. This is how simple the task is. There is no mystery.

Ramana Maharshi appeals to us to sacrifice everything for Truth. It is not that the mind of the *jnani* (Sage) and the mind of the *ajnani* (one who 'believes' enlightenment has yet to come) are different. This is simply thought. The sum and substance of the enquiry "Who am I?" is "...to remain still." The wrong identification of Self with body and senses etc. is solved with

this enquiry. This state of equilibrium is not unknown to us. To think it is, is again just thought.

Mind is the cause of bondage and liberation.

“It is the mind, alone, that is the cause of people's bondage and liberation. One whose mind is devoted to the world (of objects) is bound. One whose mind is not devoted to the world (of objects) is liberated. So it is declared (by the wise)!” (Amrtabindu Upanishad, 2)

No invocations, rites or paraphernalia required. Just the elimination of mindstuff's concoctions.

Ripus – Enemies to the Quest

Sri Shirdi Sai Baba states that inner enemies must be controlled, but he also allows that "...you can (and must) use them, ... within limits. e.g., *kama* (love, passion) for one's partner, *krodha* (anger) against unrighteousness, *lobha* (greed) for *Hari* Nama, uttering God’s name, *moha* (fondness) for *mukti* (salvation), *matsar* (hatred) for evil action; and have no *mada* (pride)." (Sai Baba's Charters and Sayings, 313)

(note: the number of *ripus* (enemies) mentioned can vary dependent on stress/interpretation of any given Sage. Here, Sai Baba mentions all six enemies (*shadripu*). Sri Ramakrishna often laid stressed on *kama* and *lobha* [the others left unsaid but understood]. The core *ripus* (*shadripu*) – *kama* (desire, longing, passion), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed, covetousness, confusion), *moha* (attachment, delusion of mind), *mada* (pride), *matsara* (jealousy and/or hatred). Although *kama* (passion) is sometimes presented as enemy number one, in truth, without *moha* (delusion of mind), even passion would remain forever latent.)

These *ripus* should be controlled by means of discrimination (*viveka*). *Viveka* also reveals when it might be appropriate for the *sadhaka* to use these enemies as allies (*ripupaksha*) – e.g. longing (*kama*) for continued engagement in the quest; anger/offense (*krodha*) at repeated misinterpretation or selfish misappropriation of the teaching of Guru, or at forgetfulness of *vichara*, etc.

Vichara is Simple

Received a YouTube link purporting to explain Ramana's Self Enquiry method. Once again it was unnecessarily long winded. The speaker seemed hell bent on turning it into a philosophical exercise instead of the philosophy elimination technique it truly is. *Vichara* is a simple process. Here is that process:

Giving up the unreal claim on reality of the body and mind, the *sadhaka* must fix the mind on the individual "I"-sense, which, although unreal, appears to be superimposed on the eternal substratum of the real Self. The question "Who am I?" is the means. If during this quest, the mind turns outwards again, predicating on this or that, the *sadhaka* should ask "to whom do these thoughts occur?" and thus move back to the primary quest "Who am I?"

Sri K. Lakshmana Sarma says: "Always and everywhere there are doorways for getting at the question 'Who am I?'. By any one of these the seeker must again and again engage the mind in this Quest. The answer to this question is not an intellectual conclusion. The (proper) answer to it is only the Experience of the Real Self in the Supreme State, arising on the death of the ego, the questioner, named the 'individual self' (the soul)." (Sri Ramanaparavidyopanishad, 483 and 484)

Succinct Teaching

I first came across Ramana Maharshi, in 1968, mentioned in a book called "Teach Yourself Yoga." The author was James Hewitt. I still have the book. It is an excellent introduction to Yoga and continues to surpass other yoga books for beginners. Here is the short passage, from the book, which introduces the teaching of Sri Ramana Maharshi – **"Pursue the enquiry 'Who am I?' relentlessly," advised an Indian guru, Sri Ramana Maharshi. "Analyse your entire personality. Try to find out where the I-thought begins. Go on with your meditations. Keep turning your attention within. One day the wheel of thought will slow down and an intuition will mysteriously arise. Follow that intuition, let your thinking stop and it will eventually lead you to the goal."** (p. 121) A wonderfully succinct passage.

This 1960 edition of Teach Yourself Yoga also contained a rather useful bibliography which led to further research via Paul Brunton's The Quest of the Overself and The Wisdom of the Overself (Rider and Co. Ltd). Paul Brunton was less succinct but proved a valuable resource in finding out a little bit more about Ramana Maharshi and his teachings.

The Question "Who am I?"

The question 'Who am I?' has no answer. No experience can answer it, for the Self is beyond experience. It has no answer in consciousness and therefore helps to go beyond consciousness.

"All I can say truly is: 'I am', all else is inference. But the inference has become a habit. Destroy all habits of thinking and seeing. The sense 'I am' is the manifestation of a deeper cause, which you may call self, God, reality or by any other name. The 'I am' is in the world; but it is the key which can open the door out of the world. The moon dancing on the water is seen in the water, but it is caused by the moon in the sky and not by the water." (Nisargadatta, in 'I am That', 44, p. 191)

Dr. Srinivasa Rao asked Bhagavan, "When we enquire within 'who am I?' what is that?"

Bhagavan: "It is the ego. It is only that which makes the *vichara* also. The Self has no *vichara*. That which makes the enquiry is the ego. The 'I' about which the enquiry is made is also the ego. As the result of the enquiry the ego ceases to exist and only the Self is found to exist." (Day by Day, 21-11-45)

"To enquire 'Who am I?' really means trying to find out the source of the ego or the 'I' thought. You are not to think of other thoughts, such as 'I am not this body, etc.' Seeking the source of 'I' serves as a means of getting rid of all other thoughts. We should not give scope to other thoughts, such as you mention, but must keep the attention fixed on finding out the source of the 'I' thought, by asking (as each thought arises) to whom the thought arises and if the answer is 'I get the thought' by asking further who is this 'I' and whence its source?" (Day by Day, 28-12-45)

Vichara as Innate Enquiry

All practice is simply a rehearsal for that eternal, innate and spontaneous enquiry.

Vichara in Daily Life

Self-enquiry can be commenced at any time and in any stage of life. Let us be clear that the performance of action is not excluded in this. Any good action which is free from ambition and selfish desire, and which discipline the behaviour of the individual and hence becomes a boon to society as a whole, can aid one in the quest of Self-realisation.

The path of *bhakti* is open to everyone. At some point, for all who are afflicted by this human condition, irrespective of their worldly status, is a time when contentment seems to be outwith one's control, an appeal to a higher power is overtly, or covertly, made. A desire to understand the truth of the Self, spontaneously, arises. This is the working of grace. Gradually the mind of the seeker, purified by his longing for truth, becomes less interested in satisfying his worldly desires, and more and more interested in the quest for truth. At this point, grace begins to manifest itself in the form of Guru, the outward manifestation of the Self. Initially the teaching may be introduced in an appropriate book. Then, when the time is right, association with a human guru whose mere presence facilitates peace of mind and a spontaneous feeling of respect, will still the mind and turn it inwards. The qualifications of the outer Guru mentioned above are very important and should be noted very carefully. The Guru's actions are always selfless and he stimulates selfless action in society as a whole. He never sees any difference between himself and others and is completely free from the egotistical notion that he has been singled out for enlightenment.

Talks on Self Enquiry

"The Heritage"
Skandashram on Arunachala, where Ramana lived in his younger years,
in realistic style

A Piece of Advice

When people came into the hall Bhagavan would listen patiently, in Silence. If this did not suffice he would tell them (egos) to go back the way they came (enquiry). All the while Bhagavan gives out his silent *upadesa*. As long as the mind springs up 'Who am I?' is necessary. This is the message. E.g. if there is one who experiences "awareness"[1] that one must be enquired into! Every day, every moment is good for *vichara* and in any situation. There is no need to hide away. Indeed this hiding away is often counter-productive. If one develops the practice of withdrawing the mind, one can live anywhere and in any circumstance. If this be practiced daily life becomes more *sattvic*

[1] relating to the awareness watching awareness method, see below

with mind arising at appropriate times rather than running aimlessly, out of control.

If one finds a teaching confusing and the teacher unable to clarify then it might be best to move on. Confusing teachers seem to tell us how rare it is to achieve the goal, and how there are very few realized souls about, or that you will realise the truth in 2 or 3 lifetimes. Perhaps these are the ones to avoid.

This is all I know. Enquiry is simple, perseverance comes with strength of mind. Strength of mind comes with practice. Stick like glue to the persistent question. Let it soak into your very being. This is Enquiry. This is Abidance. If must become 'automatic' that the mind fly to the quest at every opportunity – in sorrow, in happiness etc. Enquiry, Self abidance – two sides of the same coin. To separate them is futile.

Vichara is indeed the powerful weapon when ego arises with its fears, its argumentations etc. *Vichara* is indeed the powerful weapon to thwart the persistent ego. The method is straightforward. All else is mere mindstuff – concoction by the ego in the guise of the teacher. If one would persevere with straightforward *vichara* the poisonous concoction (mindstuff) would vanish. Everybody wants to be the teacher – nobody wants to be the disciple. This has become the norm in our 'New Age' society. Ego picks the bits of teaching it likes because they are a safe bet for self-preservation. *Vichara* is, simultaneously, the destroyer of self and revealer of Self, therefore the insincere ego finds reasons not to do it.

Ramana Maharshi advises us to dive deep into ourselves with the question 'Who am I?' Don't expect an answer to it; there is none, because every possible answer which might come to our mind is wrong. However, he promises us that one day, provided our perseverance and patience keep us on the path, there will emerge a real 'I', the identity of the Great Experience, and together with it the true happiness, which is *Satchidananda*, the bliss of Conscious Being.

The emergence of the real 'I', heralded as it is by *ahamlinga* ('I-I'), is unmistakable. If the Self be known subject and object merge into one.

"The Self does no *vichara*. That which makes the enquiry is the ego. The 'I' about which the enquiry is made is also the ego. As the result of the enquiry

the ego ceases to exist and only the Self is found to exist." (Day by Day, 21-1-45)

D.: "What is the practice (i.e. the path of Wisdom)?"

M.: "Constant search for 'I', the source of the ego. Find out 'Who am I?' The pure 'I' is the reality, the Absolute Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. When That is forgotten, all miseries crop up; when that is held fast, the miseries do not affect the person." (Talk 17)

This is all I know.

Unknown date: On *vichara* and doership

>*If this is a serious group with vichara as its core subject, then it can only be moderated by someone who has first-hand experience of vichara practice.*<

Indeed. Fortunately, everyone has firsthand experience every single day of their life. Phew!! I don't have to show my certificate. I think the dog ate it.

>*I understand that shedding the idea of being the doer is the attitude which is invaluable in atma vichara; but it is one thing to say ..."I am not the doer" and another to know it or feel it.*<

Vichara practice should take care of the one who understands, the one who has the attitude, the one who says "I am the doer," the one who knows it, the one who feels it. All of these attitudes, etc. are *vichara* fodder. Saying "I am not the doer" without questioning the one who makes such a supposition is anti-*vichara*.

>*One is not going to practice the vichara for a while and then wake up one day to find that things are now being done with no feeling of doing them.*<

Hmm! Who might wake up to feel things are now being done with no feeling of doing them?

>*Can you relate what happened when you were in active practise, and how things shifted (if that's what they did) from the idea of doership to the idea of non-doership?*<

Perhaps I had a humongous spontaneous *vichara* experience one day, non-reliant on me, even despite me, and then woke up?

There has been no shift here. If we have the idea of non-doership, it is simply an egotistic idea which needs serious *vichara* attention.

I have practiced *vichara* from a young age. It became a constant companion until one day, many years later, there was a catalyst which sparked a fear; this, in turn, sparked a frantic and spontaneous *vichara*, which appeared to eliminate the need for the practice of *vichara* – was *vichara* eliminated, or just the need to self-consciously practice it? Who knows! Who cares! *Vichara* is the default stage of the human condition [i.e. as long as there is a body/mind there is *vichara*]. Whether this is self-conscious *vichara*, or spontaneous *vichara*, or inherent *vichara*, is neither here nor there. Let's not make stages out of it. *Vichara* is *vichara*.

The idea of doership, and its corollary, non-doership, are red herrings. These ideas are overused in this internet age to the extent that they have become meaningless throwaway terms (like *advaita* - "non-dualism"). Their use as *vichara* fodder are their only intrinsic value.

Unknown date: Relative vs. absolute

>*It always comes to the relative vs. absolute for the mind as its last refuge. But this is also a concept – true?*<

It comes from the mind and therefore it must be a concept. Understanding this point is fundamental. Mind operates by means of concepts.

5/12/1999

It seems to me that the message which Ramana Maharshi left remains as valid now as it was when he was alive. 50 years have gone by since his death yet as he said on his 'deathbed', as devotees cried all around him, "Where will I go? I am here." For me this is a reality, not blind faith, nor doctrine but a living reality. For the devotees it was the same, gradually after Bhagavan's death they realised there was no change. His presence remained. This presence is the presence of Self which is ever present in our Heart.

2/1/2000

When speaking to people, I find that *Vichara* is often confused with meditation. Meditation, however, requires subject and object, whereas *Vichara* eliminates the obsession with object completely.

As Ramana says in Talks [390], "The unreality is an obsession at present. Reality is our true nature... If a seeker is advised to meditate, many may go away satisfied with the advice. But someone among them may turn round and ask, 'Who am I to meditate on an object?' Such a one must be told to find the Self. That is the finality. That is *Vichara*... When spontaneous and natural it is Realisation."

4/1/2000: Arunachala

When I was younger (many years ago) I used to pray for the day that I would travel to Arunachala, even although Bhagavan had declared that merely to think of Arunachala was sufficient for *moksha*. Nowadays the desire to physically travel there is not very strong. *Atma vichara*, I feel, is the surest way to find Arunachala, here and now. However I love to read and hear of devotees experiences at Tiruvannamalai.

4/1/2000

Ramana never taught a system of philosophy, nor did he teach a 'method' for attaining enlightenment. His influence was that of a living presence of the Self. This presence is here and now. His *Atma Vichara* (Self Enquiry) is not a yogic exercise to be done at certain times of the day and then forgotten until the next session, although that is certainly a valid way of introducing the mind to enquiry, rather it is the very essence of a human life exploring its fullest potential.

How does Ramana's teaching influence our everyday life? Is there any influence? Does *Atma Vichara* kick in at times as a centering 'force'? How often does the ego run off during the day with its vehicle 'thought' way out of control? Dwelling on the past, looking to the future, living in any possible world it can, as long as it is not now? Do judgements and vendettas come fast and furious? Are we like the politician, elected on the policies that promise to help the people, who when elected hangs on for grim death whether

or not policies are good or bad, the idea of doing good, per se, abandoned for "doing good as long as 'I' survive and it's good to 'me' too"? This survival of self, the ego, is in itself a fiction. Reflected light cannot radiate without the benefit of the source of that light.

"The Heritage",
Skandashram, in abstract style

6/1/2000

Devaraja Mudaliar has recounted that Bhagavan, in his younger days, used to go to the summit of Arunachala by a number of different routes, or even without a route, whenever he felt like it. Only the grass-cutters were aware of some of these routes. He quotes the following story from Bhagavan.

"Sometimes people would come from Madras and other parts and, setting out to reach the top of the hill, would stray near Skandasramam. Finding me seated there, they would ask me for the route to the hill top. When I told them the route was to their right and turned northward, some would say, 'Do you know who we are and wherefrom we come? We are from Madras. None of your tricks with us. The top is here straight above us and you want to lead

us astray.' I used to keep quiet. They would try to climb in a straight line, and after a long time, they would return tired out, finding that all their efforts to reach the peak were in vain. Nearing me they would bow their heads in shame and go away, avoiding me." (Mudaliar: Day by Day, 24.11.1945)

Here Bhagavan showed an easy and tested but seemingly circuitous route to the top but the advice was ignored. When talking of the spiritual path, he offered the direct route, and again his advice was often ignored.

14/1/2000

I have read a few rather bleak interpretations of 'predestination theory' recently which give enormous authority to destiny and the negation of any possible self-effort. When you turn to Ramana's proclamations on this subject, all bleakness is dispelled.

"In order that the bonds of destiny
And all its kindred may at last be loosed,
And so that one may also be released
From the dread cycle of both birth and death,
This path than the others is far easier,
Therefore be still and keep a silent hold
On tongue and mind and body. That which is
The Self-effulgent will arise within.
This is the Supreme Experience. Fear will cease.
This is the boundless sea of Perfect Bliss!"

(Atma Vidya, from Collected Works, Rider 1975)

17/1/2000

The experience of the Self is indeed effortless. It is as it is. However, once the truth of this becomes revealed, it takes time to make it firm. Practice, and Bhagavan is clear that practice (effort) is necessary, ripens to reveal the knowledge of real Being.

22/1/2000

It is the universe in its diversity which is generally spoken of as reality. The pairs of opposites (*dvandvas*) vie for our attention. Good/bad, hot/cold,

rich/poor, spiritual/material etc., we give our attention to all of these in order to make judgements on their relative merits. They are the all-important opposites. All important because without them the universe as we 'know' it would collapse into Unity. This is how simple the task is. There is no mystery. Ramana Maharshi appeals to us to sacrifice everything for Truth. It is not that the mind of the *jnani* (Sage) and the mind of the *ajnani* (one who 'believes' enlightenment has yet to come) are different. This is simply thought.

The sum and substance of the enquiry "Who am I?" is "... to remain still." The wrong identification of Self with body and senses etc. is solved with this enquiry. This state of equilibrium is not unknown to us. To think it is, is again just thought.

samatvam yoga ucyate

It is said, "Equanimity is Yoga". [Bhagavad Gita, 2.48]

Seer and seen, resolved as One.

29/1/2000

"What one fails to know by conversation extending to several years can be known in a trice in Silence, or in front of Silence – e.g. *Dakshinamurti*, and his four disciples. This is the highest and most effective language." (from Talk 246)

Many people have commented on, and attested to, the efficacy of Sri Ramana Maharshi's silence. Without words to activate the concept-seeking mind, there is instead the impetus to drive inwards to the source of the mind. Rather than hanging meaning on arbitrary words, the mind, devoid of outgoing, active content, finds the space to deliberately seek its source. This is called *Satsanga*, 'association with Being'. Whether in the presence of one who has realised the Self (perhaps the most common usage of the term) or in the mental presence of that One, the effect is the same. The gross medium of language is bypassed, and the root of all thought, the primary 'I'-thought, is stopped in its tracks. With no thought arising, there is no need for language. Neither human language nor thought is self-existent. In the absence of thought, universal silence spontaneously arises, or rather remains as it is,

as the pure essence of speech. This is the Eternal Verbum, *Sabdabrahman*, Self.

Punyaraja says in his commentary on the Vakyapadiya: “The aspirant reaches the essence of speech, the Pure Verbum, which lies beyond the vital plane, by withdrawing his mind from external objects and fixing it upon his internal nature. This entails the dissolution of the temporal sequence of thought-activity. The purification of the Verbum (the eternal light of consciousness which ever shines within the subject) results from this, and the aspirant enters into it having severed all ties with the material objective plane. This leads him to the attainment of the internal light, and, freed from all bonds and limitations, he becomes identical with the Supreme Light – the Eternal Word Principle – the undying and undecaying Spirit, called *Sabdabrahman* or the Word Absolute.” (quoted in Sastri: The Philosophy of Word and Meaning)

20/2/2000

When our will coincides with God's will, we proclaim Free Will. When our will goes against God's will, we moan about fate or destiny. Find out who is bothered by such things... And they are transcended. "To whom do these questions arise? Find out and be at peace." (from Talk 426)

23/2/2000

A man was going through the forest when he was ambushed by an enemy and shot with a poisoned arrow. One of his kin stumbled upon him and raised the alarm, and soon others arrived with antidotes to the poison. As they attempted to pull the arrow prior to applying the healing ointment, the man prevented them and began to ask various questions, such as, “You must find out for me: Who was that enemy? What was his family? Was he tall? What colour was his hair? What kind of bow did he use? What was the arrow made of? etc...” When it was suggested that the questions were irrelevant in the present situation and that without application of the healing herbs he would die, he just continued to prevent treatment, intent on gathering maximum information. Needless to say... the cure was not effective. [Buddhist parable of the poisoned arrow]

On the spiritual path, this is exactly what we do. Having been told that Self Enquiry cuts directly to the source, we still ask, “Who is the Creator? Why did he create? Why am I subjected to suffering? What is *karma*? Why do I make no progress? etc...” ad infinitum.

23/2/2000

Yogananda: “Why does God permit suffering in the world? Should He not with His omnipotence do away with it at one stroke and ordain the universal realisation of God?”

Maharshi: “Suffering is the way for Realisation of God.”

Yogananda: “Should He not ordain it differently?”

Maharshi: “It is the way.”

Yogananda: “Are Yoga, religion, etc., antidotes to suffering?”

Maharshi: ‘They help you to overcome suffering.”

Yogananda: “Why should there be suffering?”

Maharshi: “Who suffers? What is suffering?”

No answer! Finally the Yogi rose up, prayed for Sri Bhagavan's blessings for his own work and expressed great regret for his hasty return. He looked very sincere and devoted and even emotional. (from Talk 107)

The arising of suffering gives impetus to the desire for happiness. This in turn brings about the successful quest of the Self. Suffering is due to the false notion ‘I-am-the-body.’ *Jnanam* (knowledge of the Self) is getting rid of this idea.

5/3/2000

The first verse which Sri Bhagavan selected from *Sankara's* Hymn to *Siva* gives an excellent definition of *Bhakti* (devotion).

"Just as the falling seeds of the Ankola tree attach themselves to its trunk, the needle sticks to the magnet, the chaste woman to her lord, the creeper to the supporting plant, and the river flows to the ocean, so, if the flow of the

mind reaches the Lotus Feet of the Lord of souls, *Siva*, and remains there always, that is called devotion."

21/3/2000: What is *sakshi*, the witness?

[In *Advaita*, there is often talk of the inner observer or witness.]

The term witness ordinarily implies the duality of the one who witnesses and that which is witnessed. Bhagavan used the term in a slightly different way. When referring to *sakshi* – witness. He explained that the word *sakshi* must be understood as presence, without which there could be nothing. The Self is the basis of all the experiences and remains, ever, as their witness and support) *Atma Vichara* leads to the source of the ego. There the ego disappears. Remaining as that source the ego no longer arises. And as you suggest it goes on throughout all activities; walking, driving, eating etc.

21/3/2000

>I have been learning about Ramana Maharshi for the last ten years. During the last year I have started an active practice. The practice includes about one hour a day (20 minutes 3 times per day) in seated meditation focused on self-inquiry. As this meditation deepened, the inquiry extends to the rest of my activities.<

Yes!! Acquaintance with the Self is certainly gained through conscious self-effort in Self-Enquiry. Once acquainted with the Self, Self fascination spontaneously arises. Then *Atma Vichara* is constant. The default situation.

21/3/2000

>You say: "There is no two – only God's will is acting through his manifestations." Sounds like two to me! Or maybe many! My understanding is that Ramana taught that God really does exist (even as the supreme creator of the universe). But, he taught further that such a premise is only true from the relative point of view – and is only maintained by those who have not realized the truth of the matter (those who believe in the reality of individual souls). God is the last form to go – not another form to be realized, thereby establishing the duality of God and his manifestations.<

Yes, as long as the individual is there to worship God, so long do God and devotee exist independently. Unconditional surrender to the higher power or holding on to the root thought 'I' are the only two ways for realisation. (cf. Talk 321: "If one surrenders oneself there will be no one to ask questions or to be thought of. Either the thoughts are eliminated by holding on to the root-thought 'I' or one surrenders oneself unconditionally to the Higher Power. These are the only two ways for Realisation.")

22/3/2000

Indeed Self Enquiry is the worthwhile pursuit. Engaging in polemics is a waste of time. If you practice Self Enquiry eventually it is found to be both the path and the goal.

Please continue to talk of spiritual practice if you are so moved. There are various ways to practice Self Enquiry which many would discuss.

22/3/2000

>Thank you for the comment. I appreciate it. Of course what you say is known by mind, (showing again the almost useless nature of cognitive understanding when it comes to actual spiritual processes). As I practice I look for ways to bring this mere cognitive understanding into my experience and deep knowledge.<

As Bhagavan has said: "In the union of the individual with the Supreme, the Supreme is hearsay and the individual directly experienced. You can make use only of direct experience; therefore look who you are." (from Talk 332)

>One thing I have found about inquiry is that there are a lot of different angles of view. And for me it helps to look at ego-I from different viewpoints. It is like one dissolves a little ego here, some there, etc. I do this in a variety of life settings and situations, not just seated mediation (though this seated meditation is an important underpinning of my practice).<

Indeed!! And the various ways to attain Self-realisation are exactly what Bhagavan discussed. Ultimately, of course, it is only the source of the 'I'-thought which needs attention. To get there, the monkey-mind likes to leap through different branches.

22/3/2000

>As I understand his [Ramana's] Self-Realization story, this Self Enquiry is what brought him to the realization. Did he ever actually say that? If he did, could you give a citation? He probably believed that early in his career.<

Sri Bhagavan has said on many occasions that his great death-experience was essentially a questioning (*Vichara*) of whether the 'I' died with the death of the body. He also said quite categorically that this was not an act of reasoning but a flash of true perception. (cf. Mahadevan; 1977, Talks; 1955/1978, Osborne; 1959 (this is a truly excellent account) etc.) This was a 'direct experience' which he said never left him, not a 'probable belief early in his career'. His teaching never changed or developed. Why would it?

>To clear up the ignorance as to who we really are Ramana again and again recommended Self Enquiry. He recommended many things, among them Self Enquiry. Since Self Enquiry was supposedly designed for the more educated and intelligent of his devotees, educated Westerners want to believe that Self Enquiry is the correct path for themselves. What is the evidence that Self Enquiry has 'worked' for anyone, as opposed to, say, japa or bhakti?<

Sri Bhagavan spoke on all sorts of paths according to the questions of the people who visited. His nearest devotees, however, are clear that Self Enquiry was the mainstay. For this we only have to look at the work of Sri Muruganar, the poet-devotee par excellence: "Do not spread out the mind inquiring 'Who may you be?' and 'Who is he?' Turn it inward, questing steadily, keenly, 'Who am I?'" (from Ramana Mandiram)

And from Sri Bhagavan Himself in the last prose piece He wrote, 'Who am I?' prior to only responding verbally to enquiries. "... in order to realize that inherent and untainted happiness, which indeed he daily experiences when the mind is subdued in sleep, it is essential that he should know himself. For obtaining such knowledge, the enquiry 'Who am I?' in quest of the Self is the best means."

29/3/2000

Self Enquiry is clinging to the first thought 'I', which must appear before the myriad others which fill the mind, holding on to this 'I'-thought and questioning 'who/what it is' is the practice.

Self Enquiry is not a meditation practice performed at certain times of the day. Although initially that may be the way one performs it. If the enquiry is persisted with throughout the day it will continue in sleep also. (This inevitably happens.)

Some have said that it is a mere mantra-like repetition. It is not. The purpose of Self Enquiry is to focus all attention, the entire mind, on its source. The result is Self-awareness. When the mind wanders Self Enquiry pulls it back to its source. That source is the Self.

30/3/2000 "Who am I?"

It is analogous to a koan, in that as long as an answer appears, the question will continue to be asked. The pull from within becomes intense through Self Enquiry.

However if Enquiry is a matter of saying, "now I'll do five minutes of Enquiry, then I'll watch the television, then I'll have time to go to the pub," then I wouldn't hold my breath waiting for whatever one might think one was waiting for to happen.

When Enquiry is first in your life then everything falls into place. The Self is the sole constant.

With persistence in the enquiry "Who am I?" all other thoughts are destroyed... And in the end the 'I'-thought itself is destroyed, leaving the non-dual Self, resplendent as ever. One day something will happen.

The theoretical side is what one reads about, hears about in books or from the sages. This is where we gain intellectual conviction of the truth. And this in itself is important.

The Enquiry, while it may be a mental activity (intellectual) initially, becomes a subjective experience of 'I'. This experience in turn falls away

when identification with objects through thoughts disappears. We start from 'I' and end in 'I'. But look for 'I' and 'I' is nowhere to be found.

There is no answer to the question, "Who am I?" It is 'Being' without qualification.

10/4/2000: Method

The aim is indeed the same, i.e. *atmanishta* [abiding in the Self] – to be fixed as the Self. In meditation, with the mind fixed on one thought, all other thoughts are kept away. This is an excellent method for strengthening the mind which has a weakness for continual, random thoughts.

Practice of that method leads to *Atma Vichara* – Self Enquiry. When random thoughts are eliminated there still remains the meditator and the object of meditation. Then the meditator merges himself in the source. Ramana's method focusses on the meditator (the thinker) from the beginning. Ultimately that is what has to happen, a turning of attention on the one who thinks he is meditating.

Atma Vichara is a constant as long as the enquirer considers him/herself separate from enquiry. It does not have to be performed in a certain posture, for/at a certain time, or in a certain place. It is a continual process, while at work and while at play.

>It seems to me that Ramana isn't particularly pointing to consciousness or even subjectivity here as an answer, nor a way to disidentify with or slow down the flow of thoughts. Rather I think he is advising a sort of active meditation on the sense or feeling of 'I'. When I say 'I' I mean something by that, although I couldn't exactly say what. I don't really mean consciousness or a kind of abstract subjectivity. I think the idea is to let oneself be pulled into the enquiry into what we mean by 'I'. Any comments? Can someone put this in better words?<

In the conversation with the young man [in Talk 56[1]] Ramana points to the statements referring to the 'I'. "Who is the 'I' who says 'I' do not know?" Is it

[1] From Talk 56: „A youth of twenty asked how to realise the Self. He sat down in silence and waited more than an hour and then was about to leave. While doing so, he asked: D:'How to realise the Self?' M.: 'Whose Self? Find out.' D.: 'Who am I?' M: 'Find it yourself.' D.: 'I do not know.' M.: 'Think. Who is it that says "I do

the real 'I' or the false 'I'? The 'I' who says "I am not realised" or "I do not know" is an impostor. When Ramana responds "Who was born?" he attempts again to point to the futility of this 'I'-thought, because what is born must also die. Realisation is not something to be gained anew. It is eternal. There is neither birth nor death for the Self.

Seeking the source of the 'I', however, is death for the 'I'. Then you will be only what you are, absolute being. On another occasion Sri Ramana said to Swami Abhishiktananda: "Do not meditate - be! Do not think that you are - be! Don't think about being - you are!"

Seeking the source of the ‘I’, however, is death for the ‘I’. Then you will be only what you are, absolute being.

On another occasion Sri Ramana said to Swami Abhishiktananda: “Do not meditate – be! Do not think that you are – be! Don't think about being – you are!” (Abhishiktananda: Secret of Arunachala, p. 73)

16/4/2000

>*Could you, or anyone, say something about* the *‘I’-‘I’* that *Ramana sometimes talks about. I don't have a quote handy, but if you don't know what I'm referring to I can look one up.*<

In Talk 266 Sri Ramana says, “The real Self is the infinite ‘I’-‘I’, i.e. ‘I’ is perfection. It is eternal. It has no origin and no end. The other ‘I’ is born and also dies. It is impermanent. See to whom are the changing thoughts. They will be found to arise after the ‘I’-thought. Hold the ‘I’-thought. They subside. Trace back the source of the ‘I’-thought. The Self alone will remain.”

‘I’-‘I’ is the reality. For this ‘I’-‘I’ to be felt, thoughts must cease and reason disappear. It has been noted that this is initially ‘felt’ as a throb on the right side of the chest. ‘I’-‘I’, ‘I’-‘I’. This centre is the *Hridaya* [spiritual Heart], which Sri Ramana has revealed as the seat of Pure Consciousness in the body. This is the seat from which all experiences of the objective reality

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not know”? What is not known? In that statement, who is the “I”?’ D.: “Somebody in me.’ M.: ‘Who is the somebody? In whom?’ D.: ‘May be some power.’ M.: ‘Find it.’ […] D.: ‘Why was I born?’ M.: ‘Who was born? The answer is the same for all of your questions.’”

arise. Thoughts cannot enter here. The 'I'-thought is stopped dead in its tracks.

When the source of this throbbing is attentively observed there is revelation of the Self. To attain this through meditation or enquiry is to revel in unalloyed Bliss.

2/5/2000

>Self Enquiry is not focussing on the meditator but to enquire whether there is a meditator.<

Yes indeed, this is so. However, while there is the belief that there is someone who meditates, directing the mind towards that meditator is the beginning of the quest. As Ramana says in Talk 580: "The ego must be held in order to get rid of it. Hold it first and the rest will be easy."

4/5/2000

>Now if I understand Ramana correctly Self Enquiry is the direct method.<

Yes.

>However if we have to sit in meditation, get hold of the ego and then what kills it? The next question is how do I hold the ego? As an object of meditation? Is ego an object to be hold?<

Who is it who would hold the ego? This is the point.

The ego is destroyed by seeking its identity. To try to hold it, you must first find it. This is the quest. "Because the ego is no entity it will automatically vanish and Reality will shine forth by itself. This is the direct method. […] The quest 'Who am I?' is the axe with which to cut of the ego." (from Talk 146)

30/11/2000

This, 'I-I', is the constant *japa* (or '*ajapa'* – unspoken chant, i.e., effortless) of the Self in the Heart. It is never ceasing and eternally uncaused. Sri Bhagavan has mentioned (in various places) that if it appears in the body, it does so in the Heart (*Hridaya*) on the right side of the chest. Yes, it can be observed during Self Enquiry. Bhagavan is careful to explain, however, that

this does not mean that the Self resides in the body. Rather the whole cosmos resides in the Heart.

At the beginning of Talks, Bhagavan states... "the physical organ is on the left; that is not denied. But the Heart of which I speak is non-physical and is only on the right side. It is my experience no authority is required by me. Still you can find confirmation in a Malayalam Ayurvedic book and in 'Sita Upanishad'"; and he produced the quotation (mantra) from the latter and repeated the text (sloka) from the former. (Talk 4)

It is also stated in Talks that... "*Brahman* is the Heart", "the Self is the Heart." Again Bhagavan says that "there is no one who even for a trice fails to experience the Self."

4/12/2000

I came across a more pertinent reference to this 'throbbing' from the seat of consciousness (*Hridaya*) today. It is taken from the reply to an enquiry sent to an English devotee by Sri T. K. Sundaresa Iyer. The reply was approved by Bhagavan. It appears in 'Moments Remembered', p. 53.

"In the course of tracing ourselves back to our source, when all thoughts have vanished, there arises a throb from the Hridaya on the right, manifesting as '*Aham'* '*Aham'* 'I'-'I'. This is the sign that Pure Consciousness is beginning to reveal itself. But that is not the end in itself. Watch wherefrom this sphurana (throbbing) arises and wait attentively and continually for the revelation of the Self. Then comes the awareness, oneness of existence."

22/1/2001

Someone asked me the other day why *I always pointed towards Sri Maharshi's teaching of Atma Vichara*.

The reason is simplicity itself. To participate, it does not matter, where you live, whether male or female, young or old, what your culture is, what your status is, where you are, what you are doing. It does not need a set time or period of time to be effective. All that is needed is to pursue the question "Who am I?" Do your duty/work, but keep attention focussed on the enquiry. If pursued properly, the enquiry leads to the Heart centre, the true 'I-I-I'.

2/2/2001

>Is it possible for a person to renounce the EGO while leading the worldly life? It seems to be tricky one. Even if one says that I am leading a simple life with meagre needs, still there is an iota of EGO left behind. I am wondering whether it is possible to destroy the EGO while being in midst of worldly life.<

Yes...assuredly!!

Perhaps these words from Ramana Maharshi will help.

"A *jnani* crushes the ego at its source. It rises up again and again, for him too as for the ignorant, impelled by nature i.e. *prarabdha*. Both in the ignorant and the *jnani* ego sprouts up but with this difference; the former's ego when it rises up is quite ignorant of its source, or is not aware of its deep sleep in the dream and wakeful states, whereas a *jnani*, when his ego rises up, enjoys his transcendental experience with his ego, keeping his *lakshya* [aim] always on its source. His ego is not dangerous, it is only the ash-skeleton of a burnt rope; although it possesses a form it is ineffective. By constantly keeping our *lakshya* on our source our ego is dissolved." (Talk 286)

12/2/2001: om namo bhagavate sri ramanaya

'om namo bhagavate sri ramanaya' This is THE mantra for Ramana *Bhaktas*. Here's a brief summary: The name Ramana was given by Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni to Ramana when he was a young man and has, of course, become the universally accepted name we use. Ganapati Muni also confirmed Ramana as both Bhagavan and Maharshi. srI: is a respectful title. RamaNa: pleasing, charming, delightful. This undoubtedly signifies the bliss of the Self. ('ramanAya' is quite simply the dative form.)

namo: bow, obeisance (comes from namah. We spoke about 'namas' before, as in *namaste*. The change in final letters is a result of Sandhi, 'juncture'. i.e. where two words come together in sanskrit (indeed in any spoken language) there may be sound change.) bhagavate: divine, venerable, possessing fortune etc. (dative of 'bhagavat') "I make obeisance, and honour, in respect of the venerable, divine Ramana who, absorbed in the Self, is the possessor of all fortune." (very free translation) Om: in brief, a Sacred exclamation. It comes up often in my interest and teaching of *Sabdapurvayoga*.

14/2/2001: Thinking about thinking

Thought is dependent on the Self. The Self is not dependent on thought. Attending to thought without remembrance of the Self is nescience. Remember the Self and thought can take care of itself.

16/2/2001: This moment contains infinity

Spiritual effort itself is due to Grace. God Remembrance is due to Grace. The Absolute Surrender is due to Grace and it is this Moment of Truth that contains Infinity. It puts an end to all trying and doing. Here Being shines forth in all nakedness and dominates everywhere. Here, the Self Sees It Self as the Self as there is Nothing else to See but the Self.

I was reminded of Ramana's comment to a devotee concerned that his own individual efforts were weak:

M: “Grace is the Self. I have already said, ‘If you remember Bhagavan, you are prompted to do so by the Self.’ Is not Grace already there? Is there a moment when Grace is not operating in you? Your remembrance is the forerunner of Grace. That is the response, that is the stimulus, that is the Self and that is Grace. There is no cause for anxiety.”

D: “Can I engage in spiritual practice, even while remaining in *samsara*?”

M: “Yes, certainly. One ought to do so." (Talk 251)

19/2/2001: The need for remembrance

>*Imho, if there's no goal, there's no arriving there, and there's no failure... since arriving at a goal would be the same as getting nowhere, it seems much more purposeful to forget the need for goals entirely. There's nowhere to go and nothing to do – everything we need to know is inside us.*<

However... (at the risk of being untrendy): There is the goal: the experience of the non-dual Self. There is the means: *Atma Vichara*, Self Enquiry.

While we ARE the Self, for it alone is, ignorance causes us to imagine we have not realised it.

The following extract is taken from the introduction to ‘Self Enquiry’ [by Mahadevan]:

“The plenary experience of the non-dual Self is the goal; enquiry into the nature of the self is the means. When the mind identifies the self with the not-self (the body, etc.), there is bondage; when this wrong identification is removed through the enquiry ‘Who am I?’ there is release. Thus, Self Enquiry is the direct path taught by Bhagavan Ramana. The ‘I’-experience is common to all. Of all thoughts, the ‘I’-thought is the first to arise. What one has to do is to enquire into the source of the ‘I’-thought. This is the reverse process of what ordinarily happens in the life of the mind. The mind enquires into the constitution and source of everything else which, on examination, will be found to be its own projection; it does not reflect on itself and trace itself to its source. Self-discovery can be achieved by giving the mind an inward turn. This is not to be confused with the introspection of which the psychologists speak. Self Enquiry is not the mind's inspection of its own contents; it is tracing the mind's first mode, the ‘I’-thought to its source which is the Self. When there is proper and persistent enquiry, the ‘I’-thought also ceases and there is the wordless illumination of the form ‘I’-‘I’ which is the pure consciousness. This is release, freedom from bondage. The method by which this is accomplished, as has been shown, is enquiry which, in *Vedanta*, is termed *jnana*, knowledge.” (Self Enquiry (Vicharasangraham) by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, translation by Dr T. M. P. Mahadevan)

Realisation is possible here... now... in this life. Of that, there is absolutely no doubt!!! Take up the Means!! Reach the Goal!!

>If you read more carefully you will see that the statement made by Joel Goldsmith refers to those who make NO effort. I.e. without effort you'll perhaps catch a glimpse of the Self but you'll not understand why it happened or how it happened or if it happened or if it'll happen again. namaste<

True.

By constant practice of *Atma Vichara* the mind sinks readily, with true knowledge, in its source. The shepherd’s search for the lamb believed lost, which is all the time lying over his shoulders and not lost, is still a search after all. Although close, without the search the lamb remains lost (see reference to ‘shepherd’ below).

From ‘Self Enquiry’ (in Collected Works, p. 32):

“M: The *jiva* [individual soul] itself is *Shiva*; *Shiva* Himself is the *jiva*. It is true that the *jiva* is no other than *Shiva*. When the grain is hidden inside the husk, it is called paddy; when it is de-husked, it is called rice. Similarly, so long as one is bound by *karma* one remains a *jiva*; when the bond of ignorance is broken, one shines as Shiva, the Deity. Thus declares a scriptural text.

Accordingly, the *jiva* which is mind is in reality the pure Self; but, forgetting this truth, it imagines itself to be an individual soul and gets bound in the shape of mind. So its search for the Self, which is itself, is like the search for the sheep by the shepherd. But still, the *jiva* which has forgotten its self will not become the Self through mere mediate knowledge. By the impediment caused by the residual impressions gathered in previous births, the *jiva* forgets again and again its identity with the Self and gets deceived, identifying itself with the body, etc.

Will a person become a high officer by merely looking at him? Is it not by steady effort in that direction that he could become a highly placed officer? Similarly, the *jiva*, which is in bondage through mental identification with the body, etc., should put forth effort in the form of reflection on the Self, in a gradual and sustained manner; and when thus the mind gets destroyed, the *jiva* would become the Self*. The reflection on the Self which is thus practised constantly, will destroy the mind and thereafter will destroy itself like the stick that is used to kindle the cinders burning a corpse. It is this state that is called release.”

(* “Though the obstacles which cause the bondage of birth may be many, the root-cause for all such changes is *ahamnkara* [I-sense]. This root-cause must be destroyed for ever.” Vivekacudamani)

20/2/2001: Goal or not goal

>Perhaps it's only semantics, as I think we both speak of the same realization. Is it a goal or is it not a goal? I don't know. Is it a paradox? May be.<

“The ‘I’ casts off the illusion of ‘I’ and yet remains as ‘I’. Such is the paradox of Self-Realisation. The realised do not see any contradiction in it.” (from Talk 28)

>I guess for me if I know I'm already there, that this life path is for returning to whence I came, then the goal has already been met. I'm already there. No need to have even this as a goal.<

Indeed, there is nothing new to attain, only to be that which you always are and have always been. In essence, the goal is simply to remove the veil-like covering of ignorance which obscures the Self. The ignorance being that of the ego-self which, assuming a stance separate from everything else, then looks at and acts on this falsely perceived as separate universe.

>Perhaps this is why Ramana said the highest teaching is in silence. Beyond the need to define.<

The *jnani* uses his own language, whether with or without words, it makes no difference.

23/2/2001

If we objectify this nothing (whatever it may be) we're lost. Instead find that which is the eternal, boundless and limitless subject, "...because there is nothing alien to the Self." (from Talk 42)

"Meditate on who you are. Quit imagining." To imagine what something (nothing) is... is to be lost. To search for 'it', as an objectified entity, will always be problematic. To search for the searcher, however, to trace back to the sole source, is undoubtedly "...an easy thing." So easy, in fact, that it is regularly dismissed in a furious search for complications.

Analysis of the many is superseded by enquiry into the One. Nothing can be outside of this immediate, endless, unbroken, multi-dimensional Self.

It is 'my' subjective realisation which reveals this. Something exists only so long as there is some other to observe it. 'My' subjective realisation extends beyond this limited 'me'.

23/2/2001

>[A questioner quoted the following verse from Lalla:]

With repeated meditation practice
the expanse of the visible universe
with all its qualities dissolves

to nothing, to where there is
only health and great joy.
- Lalla, 14th Century North Indian mystic<

This dissolution IS the infinite expanse of the "boundless Subject". The Self is all that has been, is, and ever will be. One without another.

"Meditate on who you are,
Quit imagining."

Sage advice!!

Advaita Enso[1]

10/3/2001: The key to happiness

>A favorite saying I heard a while back: "The key to happiness is not getting what you want, it is wanting what you have."<

The key to happiness is finding out who you are and abiding there. The means is *atma vichara*.

[1] In Zen art, an enso is a circle hand-drawn in one or two uninhibited brushstrokes to express the Zen mind, which is associated with enlightenment, emptiness, freedom, and the state of no-mind. (cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ensō)

"What is happiness? Is it a healthy and handsome body, timely meals, and the like? Even an emperor has troubles without end though he may be healthy. So all suffering is due to the false notion 'I am the body'. Getting rid of it is *jnanam*." (Talk 633)

3/4/2001: Clarity in living

>Why could the saint not be the person next door? Because most people would not take notice? Or they would not believe that they are realized? Most expect a realized being to be different from the ordinary person, to have done extraordinary things. Maybe it is like setting a high price for a product in order to convince people of its value?<

Why shouldn't there be a sage on every street corner? Mind it is, and mind alone, which prevents this. It is the mind of the *ajnani* which declares such doubts.

>The disadvantage of having our saints different from us is that we wonder if we have to change our worldly situation in order to become realized ourselves. And we wonder if we can do it.<

If a saint is seen as different from us it is through our misunderstanding only. For the *jnani* there can be no difference. There is no need to change anything. That would serve to present further complications. What would one change? One is already all that one need be. It is eternal and remains the same all along. "It is always and everywhere – here and now too." (Ramana Maharshi, Talks)

8/4/2001

>I have trouble stopping the thoughts and doing Self Enquiry when I need to deal with people. And I need to deal with other people in many complex ways.<

The practice of *Atma Vichara* should be continuous. No need to stop in the midst of daily life. If one forgets, simply take it up again when one remembers. Eventually the enquiry becomes a constant.

9/4/2001

>I also still have not got a convincing reply to problems related to work. I would go to the extent of asking that, has somebody (let that somebody be of average credentials nay maybe inferior credentials though the same maybe partly due to circumstances) having full faith in Ramana got out of an unpleasant job (quitting without any standby options – normally everybody's advice is quit if you have an alternative on hand) and carving a niche for himself in life having confidence that his goodness and talent makes him deserve better without any prejudices towards his past employers. (i.e the ones he had left).<

Yes!!

My life has been full of stops and starts. Some will-full, others not. On more than one occasion I have "burnt my boat" (as my father used to say). The ONE constant is absolute faith in Bhagavan Sri Ramana and His Teaching. Whether or not I would advise such things to another is quite a different matter. How deep is your Faith?? The depth of your Faith is the only consideration in this. Who ... are ... you? Why do you need to get out? Is this simply ego too? Irrespective of the situation, *Atma Vichara* is the key!!!!

>Also I would like to state that this moment we are lucky that we can ask questions today and we have somebody to answer them. Tomorrow we may drift and get caught up in mundane activities forgetting Ramana's name and forums such as these to enhance one's spirituality and then remember only at the fag end of one's life. However, as RAMANA has assured us it will definitely come alright at the 'End'. Let us pray that this 'End' comes sooner than later.<

The 'end' comes right now... now... now... now (ad infinitum). The only barrier to this is the ego and its efforts to perpetuate itself. Act now. *Atma Vichara* is the means and the goal. Any delay is the not so subtle ploy of the ego.

3/5/2001: What is Self Enquiry?

>I have read what Ramana Maharshi has said re: Self Enquiry, but I would like to know if you ask: "Who am I?" Should we really wonder? Or just listen after asking the question. Seems if I really wonder, I am digging and

the pot is stirring rather than a flippant... "who am I" which doesn't stir anything... How do you inquire?<

The enquiry searches for the source of the ego. The purpose is to focus the mind on its own source and rest there. The 'I'-thought is the root from whence all other thoughts arise. As long as any answer to the question is found, enquiry into the one (I) who finds answers is necessary. If one focusses in this way, the mind (ego) vanishes and the Self remains self-evident.

"In the interior of the Heart-cave *Brahman* alone shines in the form of the *Atman*, self-evident, as 'I-I'." (Ramana Gita, 2.2)

20/5/2001

>I am bound to consider that analysing, classifying, and so on help as long as somebody needs them and at a certain point preoccupation with all this could be a terrible waste of time.<

Yes, indeed. Words and their analysis and classification, or use in analysis and classification, are reflections in *Brahman* which create the illusion of sequence. This is the start of diversity and difference. Trace back to the source of the word. Go beyond (before) sequence and differentiation, beyond (before) *ahamkara* (ego), and the Word-Self (Supreme Self) shines eternally, sequencelessly, undifferentiatedly. This is the ultimate end of the elusive and misunderstood practice called *Sabdapurvayoga*.

22/6/2001 Is the world real or unreal?

This is often a point of contention and/or confusion.

A question arose if the world is real or unreal, since it is claimed to be both by the *Advaitins* themselves. Sri Bhagavan said that it is unreal if viewed as apart from the Self and real if viewed as the Self. "The *ajnani* takes the world to be real; whereas the *jnani* sees it only as a manifestation of the Self. It is immaterial if the Self manifests itself or ceases to do so.'" (from Talk 65)

The point we can take here is that it is the seer who establishes the reality or unreality of the world. Find the seer. The Self is eternally aware. Sometimes it identifies as the seer, and objects appear. This is the creation of the world as a 'separate' entity.

5/8/2001

>My question is: How to manage a spiritual life in the West > nowadays? Is withdrawing into solitude as Paul Brunton did in his later years the only answer? Would Ramana Maharshi, if he lived at present, still exhort his followers not to renounce the world?<

This is a reply Sri Bhagavan gave to a similar question. I trust it will help.

"You may remain where you are and go on with the work. What is the undercurrent which vivifies the mind, enables it to do all this work? It is the Self. So that is the real source of your activity. Simply be aware of it during your work and do not forget it. Contemplate in the background of your mind even whilst working. To do that, do not hurry, take your own time. Keep the remembrance of your real nature alive, even while working, and avoid haste which causes you to forget it. Be deliberate. Practice meditation to still the mind and cause it to become aware of its true relationship to the Self which supports it. Do not imagine it is you who are doing the work. Think that it is the underlying current which is doing it. Identify yourself with the current. If you work unhurriedly, recollectedly, your work or service need not be a hindrance." (from Conscious Immortality, p. 102)

9/9/2001: In a windless place

[BG 6.19: “Just as a lamp in a windless place does not flicker, so the disciplined mind of a yogi remains steady in meditation on the Supreme.”]

The simile, 'As a lamp in a windless place does not flicker' comes to mind for the Yogi, who, with controlled mind, is practising the Yoga of the Self.

23/9/2001

To search for a centre is to search in vain, having saddled that which is limitless with a limited periphery. To search within is simply to realise there is no without. Or... if there is such reference to 'without' then it is synonymous with the reference 'within'.”

Self Realisation is like the proverbial empty pot. Emersed in the ocean it is full of ocean. Sitting on the shore it is full of air.

26/9/2001: Nothing but games

>I see nothing but games!... Arbitrary, man-made games... Either one says: Well, if it's all a hoax, the hell with all of it! ... Whether I die at the end of a healthy life or of liver trouble due to being an alcoholic or of AIDS… or of being chair-electrocuted due to a crime… or of yoga-standing on my head too long… or committing suicide, or of trying to open my third eye with a nail and hammer (as some tradition actually recommends)… it has no real meaning either way …

Or one closes the eyes to the what-is, and joins and sticks to the saving-raft/rope (or end of it) of one's choice… 'THE Way' or 'non- path', in great pink (& hidden) hopes… Or one consciously chooses to play the game of one's choice, worldly, social or spiritual, as if it was some 'absolute transcendental and ultimate reality or means thereto' or at least 'good enough for me'... Or one believes "it's all illusion" ... or "it's all God" ... Or one confesses "I know nothing!", while actually utterly drowning in one of the above games. Or ... ?... one realises all this is entirely dependent on what the 'I', making the statement, is understood to be. Is he the ego or the Self ?<

Consider the sun and the world's actions... the sun is necessary for daily activities. He does not, however, form part of the world's actions; yet they cannot take place without the sun. He is the witness of the activities. So it is with the Self. The ego acts in the presence of the Self. He cannot exist without the Self. So long as egoity lasts, the games go on. When egoity ceases to be, actions become spontaneous. The games might appear to go on, but who on earth is playing them?

27/9/2001

>Anyway, I questioned, as that might be the one light, not belonging to this structure of endless models & paradigms (egoistic games)… or maybe not.<

Inevitably, the questions (and answers) are firmly encoded to the game. That does not mean they should not be asked but rather the reverse... they will be asked, irrespective of any denial pointed in that direction. It is always the ego who asks; it is always the ego who cannot find the answer. Even in de-

nial, the question by default is hinted at. Look for it and it will not be found. That is the way.

Enso

25/10/2001

>My focus is more on how maya can be illusion, yet Brahman is all there is.<

It's kind of like calling one end of a street by one name and the other end by another. The names are merely superimpositions. The street is all there is.

"All transformation has speech as its basis, it is name only." (Chandogya Upanishad, VI.1.4)

19/11/2001

To ask the identity of this inner Guide is surely mere rhetoric. His identity is uniquely known, always, as the closest of the close, the non-dual support of mind and body, the *sakshi* or silent witness of this, that, and everything,

shining, like the sun giving light universally to all. The only barrier to this light is the ego which appears to cast the shadow of *avidya*. This confusion arises when the shadow is seen but the essential light source which allows production of shadow is missed.

11/1/2002: [A reminder re polemical discussions]

It is interesting, indeed, that all this polemic can take up so much time, energy and space. While this might be something to get involved in, at times, in academic pursuits, it is really of no use here. If you must, at least make an attempt to structure the arguments, rather than give an opinionated inertia. The wonderful arguments and rebuffs of the likes of *Bhaskara*, *Sankara* and *Ramanuja*, in their *Bhashyas* of the Vedanta Sutras, are wonderful (a delight) to study, but remember, these are only attempts at 'proving' a particular philosophy, or a particular interpretation of a particular philosophy. Other than that, they serve no purpose... Better to keep silent than embark on futile arguments. There is no purpose in this... certainly not on this list.

If there is a feeling of *viyoga*... then yoga is required. The type of Yoga is down to temperament. One method/attitude might be easy for one person, another for someone else. Sri Ramana has said this. Why should we, on this list assume to know better?

In response to the question "If the *advaita* is final, why did *Madhvacharya* teach *dvaita*?" Sri Bhagavan replies, "Is your Self *dvaita* or *advaita*? All systems agree on Self-surrender. Attain it first, then there will be time to judge whose view is right or otherwise." (from Talk 282)

I do not see Sri Ramana's words as philosophy (perhaps I am wrong), although apparently some people read them as such. He was certainly clear that the polemical attitude was a complete waste of time.

"Why waste your time in such polemics? Only turn your mind inward and spend time usefully." (from Talk 332)

Please discuss Sri Ramana's teachings, please post your favourite quotes, please inform us of *satsangs*, please post quotes from *Upanishads* etc., please ask about things which do not seem clear, there are wonderful devotees of Sri Ramana here who may be able to help clarify things, please post

experiences of Sri Bhagavan. Young or old... new to Sri Ramana or long-term devotee… please be welcome… let us sit together... in harmony.

Above all else realise Sri Bhagavan's words when He says..., "Simple Being is the Self."

5/2/2002: Is everything ordained?

>I have to admit, this is the toughest part of Sri Bhagavan's teaching for me to understand. In fact, this is the only part that I have a difficult time with. While I can see his viewpoint in a situation like India in the past where there was little or no flexibility in terms of type of employment, culture, caste membership, and many other factors of life, I have seen too many here in the West, in modern times who seemed to have overcome the 'flow of fate' through concerted effort and prayerful action.<

Things happen. Deeds are done. One can associate with the actions done with desire by this body/mind and claim praise in success and deny blame in failure (or blame others etc.). Or one can turn to the Self in complete surrender. Everything happens according to *prarabdha*. This will exhaust itself if one surrenders to the Self. The path of desire gives the illusion of free-will to a fictitious individual ... the path of surrender submits to the will of the sole reality of the Self. This is *jnana*. This is *bhakti*. There is no I, no you etc., to claim free will or submit to predestination. There is nothing outside of the Self.

And from Conscious Immortality: "Whose freewill is it? You believe it is yours. You are beyond freewill and fate. Abide as that and you transcend them both." (Ramana Maharshi; see also Talk 209)

7/3/2002: How to develop humility?

>There is a question for all here: During our sadhana at times we have to grapple with our egos – really king size :) How do you transcend your egoistic thoughts that erupt in your mind all the time? How do you develop humility?<

Ego is an instrument of the Self. Other than this, it has no independent existence. Sometimes it appears... sometimes not. Rather than carry the instrument around when it's not needed, remember to put it down. If through prac-

tice this remembrance becomes the default situation, there is no problem and no need to be concerned about developing (or not developing) humility.

29/3/2002

The simplest practice of all is *Atma Vichara*. That is Sri Ramana's gift to us. That is what is discussed here. Why give the mind fuel for thought when all that needs to be done is to "Seek the mind. On being sought, it will disappear. The mind is only a bundle of thoughts. The thoughts arise because there is a thinker. The thinker is the ego. The ego, if sought, will vanish automatically. The ego and the mind are the same. The ego is the root-thought from which all other thoughts arise. Dive within. You are now aware that the mind rises from within. So sink within and seek. You need not eliminate the wrong 'I'. How can 'I' eliminate itself? All that you need do is to find out its origin and abide there. Your efforts can extend only thus far. Then the beyond will take care of itself. You are helpless there. No effort can reach it." (from Conscious Immortality, p. 90)

"The intricate maze of philosophy of different schools is said to clarify matters and reveal the truth. But in fact, they create confusion where no confusion need exist. To understand anything there must be the Self. The Self is obvious. Why not remain as the Self?" (Talk 392)

29/3/2002

>"One early morning Sri Bhagavan explained how we have a glimpse of the real Self every day. 'Between sleep and waking there is a momentary twilight. The waking consciousness begins with the 'I' thought. Just before the up-surge of the 'I' thought, there is a split second of undifferentiated, pure consciousness. First unconsciousness, then the light of pure consciousness, then the 'I' thought with which the world-consciousness floods in, this is the order. The middle state is Self-awareness. We can sense it if we are sufficiently alert and watchful." (taken from G.V. Subbaramayya: Sri Ramana Reminiscences, p. 17)<

Thank you for this sage piece of advice. This is a great place to start *Atma Vichara*. With practice *Atma Vichara* will start immediately on wake-up. What better way to start the day?!?!

30/3/2002

>Unfortunately for me the dream state comes right after the deep sleep state and in the dream state there is for me a surreal sense of 'I'-consciousness and therefore I miss the pure consciousness state. So, to catch the transition from the deep sleep state to the dream state will take more mental power that I have right now. Anyone else have some thoughts on this?<

In deep sleep one is in 'unconscious' Self-Realisation. There is no 'I' therefore only the Self exists. The Self exists throughout all three states. It is the only continuity, the true Identity. The individual has no continuity. If one can slow down the arising of '*ahamkara'* [I-sense] in the transition from one state to another, then one experiences That. The window of opportunity appears to be very small. What is required is vigilance.

Through Grace and the development of a continual process of *Atma Vichara* while awake, one automatically turns towards the Source at every opportunity. Then, just after sleep, at a time when *ahamkara* is weakest (just as it arises), *Atma Vichara* will automatically kick in. Gradually, *ahamkara* can be held off for longer and longer periods. If this kind of discipline is practiced ahamkara gives way much more easily, and much more often. It is only thought that interferes.

1/4/2002

>I am curious about the pronunciation of this... [om namo bhagavate sri ramanaya]. Could someone help me phonetically? Also is this just a greeting or can it be used as a mantra?<

"Om namo bhagavate sri ramanaya" meaning: "I bow down, in humble obeisance (in surrender), to Lord Sri Ramana." What better mantra could there be for His devotee!?! It's a great 'cutter of thought' and prelude to *Atma Vichara*. It is the Supreme *ajapa-japa*.

Om
namo
bhagavatay (/ bh / is an aspirate / b / (slight aspiration)
shree
ramanaaya (/ n / is retroflex, the third syllable is long)

3/4/2002 Experiences

>How is it possible to see the world and its objects as illusionary, as long one has to deal with it all?<

Dealing with the world is part of the illusion. It is symptomatic of the human condition which, having forgotten its own Self, dwells in an external, material universe. As long as one does not see the Self as the origin of all, and one's very identity, so long can it (world and objects) be described as illusionary.

World and objects are creations of the mind. They exist in subjective consciousness. *Jnana* (knowledge of the Self) eliminates this false identity. This is effected by tracing the 'I' back to its source.

"Until there is the 'I'-thought, there will be no other thought. Until other thoughts arise, (asking) 'To whom?' (will call forth the reply) 'To me'. He who pursues this closely, questioning 'What is the origin of the 'I'?' and diving inwards reaches the seat of the mind (within) the Heart, becomes (there) the Sovereign Lord of the Universe. O boundless Ocean of Grace and Effulgence called Arunachala, dancing motionless within the court of the Heart! There is no (longer any) dream there of such dualities as in and out, right and wrong, birth and death, pleasure and pain, or light and darkness." (Eleven Verses to Arunachala, 7)

3/4/2002

>When I sit for doing Vichara I start to watch my thoughts… but I get only a blank… but after sometime when I am engrossed in thoughts I am not able to watch my thoughts… I forget to watch the thoughts… This is my problem… Am I doing the correct way?… Please help me out.<

If there is awareness of a blank, then there is an observing subject. Perseverance with the practice of *Atma Vichara* will overcome it. Realising that you have been engrossed in thought is the Grace which provides impetus for continuing with *Atma Vichara*.

"One-pointed perseverance alone is essential in Self Enquiry and that is done purely inwardly, all the time. Your attention on the Self within alone is essential." (Ramana Maharshi in Moments Remembered, p. 77)

8/4/2002

>He [not clear who is meant] says that it is impossible to experience the Self.<

Are we talking about knowledge... or experience? One involves subject and object, the other is eternal Truth. If you are asking 'can the Self be experienced?' then the answer can ONLY be... "Yes!!" This is Being. Without that primary 'experience' (or Self-awareness) all else would be chaos.

11/4/2002

The body-mind can suffer terribly – believe me, this is the experience here. Where there is health… there is also sickness. This is the play of consciousness. The world of opposites. On almost daily basis there is advice given regarding this therapy or that therapy or this medicine or that medicine from concerned family and friends. I have no interest in this stuff… although at times painkillers have to be taken. For this human condition 'who am I?' is the only remedy.

"Let the body complete the task for which it came into being… Like an actor playing his part in the drama – free from love and hatred." (from Talk 653)

26/4/2002

>I am asking you about how you are reacting to your "ill heath"? Has your practice and Ramana's teaching been of benefit to your experiencing of your body problems? Can you stay with the pain and return to your sense of conscious presence? Feel free not to respond to this inquiry.<

We must, we should, each, examine these things for ourselves. What I have to say may be of no use. Here is a response to the inquiry.

There is never a return to consciousness. Rather, consciousness is the unique, eternal, consistent 'experience'.

Pain is a natural response of the body. Who denies it? Like pleasure it can become a full on 'experience'. Where the problem might arise is in the denial, or non-acceptance, of the pain, resulting in the desire to replace it with something more pleasurable. Is pain separate from me? Is pleasure separate

from me? Are pleasure and pain independent entities? By desiring pleasure and eschewing pain all is lost!! I take a painkiller and get a bit of relief.

Sometimes the body suffers and it is hard to stand up, sometimes a headache might interfere with daily tasks, with a broken leg, it's no longer possible to long jump, etc. The body reacts accordingly. There's a process to go through. If that involves medical help, so be it.

Self Enquiry is a constant throughout all these 'experiences' /'processes'.

>As we have started to share our experiences and spiritual struggles here I come in with my struggle: it is fear of death, the fear of death of the ego, the fear to lose this identification with the body-mind, something which is very similar to what Major Chadwick reports in his reminiscences:

"After I had been meditating in the presence of Bhagavan for some months, I reached a certain stage when I would be overcome by fear. I asked Bhagavan about this. I was assured by some of those present in the Hall at the time, not of course by Bhagavan, that this was all wrong and quite absurd. In fact they laughed at me for my foolishness. Bhagavan was not so amused. He explained that it was the ego that experienced the fear as it felt that it was gradually losing its grip. It was, in fact, dying, and naturally resented it. He asked me, 'To whom is the fear? It is all due to the habit of identifying the body with the Self. Repeated experience of separation from this idea will make one familiar with this state and fear will then automatically cease.'" (Sadhu Arunachala: A Sadhu's Reminiscences, p. 46 f)

Sri Ramana once gave this beautiful reply to Chadwick and I take it also as a reply for me. I only wanted to share this, because there may be some here who have to deal with a similar struggle.<

A suggestion:

antakAle ca mAmeva smaranmuktvA kalevaram /
yah prayAti sa madbhAvam yAti nAstyatra saMSayah //
yaM yaM vApi smaranbhAvaM tyajatyante kalevaram /
taM tamevaiti kaunteya sadA tadbhAvabhAvitah //

"And the one, who, at the time of death, having abandoned the body, remembers Me alone, that one attains the True Nature of 'I'; in this there is no doubt. Whatever mental state one remembers, at the end, when one leaves

the body, to that alone one goes, O Son of Kunti, (because of) ever 'thinking' of that state." (Bhagavad Gita, 8.5,6)

This is the reason Self Enquiry, 'practice' is so important. At the time of death, the ego throws up all the reasons it can to show its (small) self-importance. It reflects on its life... desperate to sustain that life. It bemoans the loss of its family and friends. It screams that this cannot be happening to one so awfully important. It remembers its possessions. It dwells on property and business. All it is... is these random thoughts. All this seems like it takes an age... but happens in the blink of an eye. EGO PANICS. This is the time to catch it. If Self Enquiry has been rehearsed in the 'strong' mind... it cuts in, finding ego weak and vulnerable, and eradicates all trace of ego... there and then. Of this there is absolutely no doubt. There is absolutely no doubt.

1/5/2002

>I am still dealing with your reply. You speak here about the last moment before death. I experience now the same what you are describing. It also can happen in the process of Self Enquiry over a longer period of time. The ego does everything to come back to its normal strength and awareness and for this the body-mind goes on strike – everything is out of order – there is enormous suffering – everything outwardly becomes extremely difficult. Is this normal? Or is there something going wrong?<

Self Enquiry is a continual practice. Whenever the mind forgets to enquire, which is its normal trait, it needs to be nudged back in the direction of enquiry. If this enquiry becomes the predominant habit of the mind... so be it.

As long as one identifies wrongly with the body, so long will one see the world as an external manifestation, with consequent suffering. The solution is to seek the Reality first. At the time of death (at ego's weakest), the mind flails about in blind panic. During everyday life it seems self-assured of its existence. Even deep sleep is not feared, but rather welcomed, because the ego has experience of always re-appearing. Its confidence is its weakness. At times this weakness becomes self-evident. When one wakes up for example. If Self Enquiry starts on wake up... or at times of observance of breath-taking beauty... etc. ego is caught unawares at these times. (shhh...don't tell it).

27/5/2002

>There is some powerful energy arising upwards. It makes me confused as it is new to me.<

Do not fret!! *Vichara* is undoubtedly the practice and the goal. At times progress seems unattainable. How can one tell what is or is not progress? Trust in Sri Bhagavan. Pray to Sri Bhagavan (if you are so moved). *Kundalini* is none other than '*aham sphurana'*. It is called by many names.

>Once the (ego-less) peace is experienced in atma vichara, ego appears all the stronger at other times.<

Now is the time to set the Enquiry on auto-pilot. Develop a constant Enquiry. Make Enquiry your default setting. The arising *'aham sphurana'* is a blessing. The intuitive sight (feel) of the flash is the forerunner of the Self. Whenever you realise that Enquiry has ceased, gently bring it back into play. Day and night… night and day. Then… who knows?!?

28/5/2002

The *aham sphurana* is actually the arising of the Self. Some have said it reverberates as 'I'-'I'. This is the cause of great fear for the ego. But realise… you are not this imaginary ego but rather the ever-present Self.

"When *Aham* represents the Self only, it is *Aham Sphurana*. This is natural to the *jnani* and called *jnana* by *jnanis*, or *bhakti* by *bhaktas*. … *Aham vritti* ('I'-thought) is broken, *Aham Sphurana* (the light of 'I'-'I') is unbroken, continuous. After the thoughts subside, the light shines forth." (from Talk 307)

29/5/2002

'*Sphurana'* can be translated in many ways – flashing, glistering, quivering, vibrating, throbbing, coming into view, manifestation etc.

In essence, it is the primary manifestation of the Self in the body (the real source of creation). It is experienced when the flow of consciousness is reversed and thoughts/ego are traced back to the Heart Centre (*hrdaya*). Some have experienced this as a physical manifestation on the right side of the chest. One may continue to sense a constant *sphurana* after revelation of the

Self. In absolute terms, however, there is no location. This is simply the centre without bounds.

Sphurana

29/5/2002: *Aham sphurana*

>In a certain context I came across that word 'aham shurana'. I remember that Ramana before his self-realization had sphurana of Arunachala. The meaning of 'sphurana' is not quite clear to me. I have only a vague idea that it has the meaning of 'pulsation' or 'vibration'. Can anyone here say more about? Where does this sphurana (pulsation of aham) happen? Is it in the spiritual Heart- centre? How is it experienced? What is its meaning in the context of Self Enquiry? What is it? Thanks in advance for every comment.<

'*Sphurana'* can be translated in a variety of ways – flashing, glistening, quivering, vibrating, throbbing, coming into view, manifestation, etc.

In essence it is the primary manifestation of the Self in the body (the real source of creation). It is experienced when the flow of consciousness is reversed and thoughts/ego are traced back to the Heart centre (*Hridaya*). Some have experienced this as a physical manifestation on the right side of the

chest. One may continue to sense a constant *sphurana* after the revelation of the Self. In Absolute terms, however, there is no location. This is simply the centre without bounds.

3/6/2002

>At the moment I feel the need of some assistance. Somehow, I have reached a certain point on which it can easily happen that one takes the wrong direction. The sudden arising of all kinds of energies is disturbing and new. I often give too much attention to them and sometimes I do very much the contrary to self-enquiry. It seems to me that when I let this ego go out and play its games this makes it stronger and it gains strength by being allowed. So I come back to this, that it is better to held it back as much as possible and as soon as it arises bring it back to its source – if possible. I think, that I have taken again the wrong direction in letting it arise and go out free. Is it so?<

Cut the thought/energy even before it is complete. As soon as you realise thoughts are wandering cut them short, immediately. Do not dwell on the thoughts you've missed, simply concentrate on those active now. It is possible to attend to all things in 'the world' with attention solely focused on the Source. This is the aim. If one simply observes the thoughts there is still the danger of association with the thoughts. What one associates with… one becomes. Associate only with Him! It is the Source which should be 'watched' for. The thoughts are a mere phantasm. Look at the Real.

8/6/2002: Did Ramana have a Guru?

>Does it have to be a living Guru? My other 5 masters that initiated me, and that no longer interest me, say absolultely that you need a living Guru.<

M.: "The Guru may be sometimes inanimate also, as in the case of *Avadhuta*. God, Guru and the Self are identical." (from Talk 23)

Living... dead, birth... death, such hurdles.

"Supremely complete, without beginning or end, unlimited, unascertainable, unchanging, *Brahman* is One without a second, there is nothing other than He." (Vivekacudamani)

14/6/2002

>You mention that Ramana said, "Surrender your mind to me and I'll do the rest". Is he saying surrender to him (Ramana), or to the "I" that is us all. If you direct your surrender to his form or the teachings I think the point is missed.<

The essential factor is surrender of the ego. Then mind is resolved in its Source, which is God or Self. Surrender gives the mind one-pointedness. Sri Bhagavan has said: "It is enough that one surrenders oneself. Surrender is to give oneself up to the original cause of one's own being. Do not delude yourself by imagining such source to be some God outside you. One's source is within yourself. Give yourself up to it. That means you should seek the source and merge in it." (from Talk 208)

16/6/2002

Vichara, when spontaneous, is not action. Meditation requires subject and object, whereas *Vichara* is, of necessity, devoid of object. *Vichara* is *samadhi*. *Vichara* is *turiya*. *Samadhi* is *turiya*. True *Vichara* is Realisation. Realisation is devoid of action.

samnyasya sarvakarmANi bhavabandhavimuktayeyatyatAm paNDitair
dhIrair AtmAbhyAsa upasthitaih / 10 /

"Abandoning all actions in order to break free from the bond of birth and death, abidance in the Self is attained by the courageous wise man." (Vivekacudamani, 10)

20/6/2002: Truthfulness

>Is truth in speech subjective and therefore varies according to one's conditioning?<

Where truth is ... falsehood is not. *Brahman* is truth. The Self cannot be attained without practicing truth. Suffering is the result of false relationships, false fears, false ideas. Liberation is truth. How is this liberation realised?

Through right action of mind, speech, and body. That is jnana, that is freedom, that is moksha. Self Enquiry is constant truth. Maintaining the quest even in the midst of worldly duties ensures right action.

21/6/2002

>Is truth in speech subjective and therefore varies according to one's conditioning?<

Where truth is… falsehood is not. *Brahman* is truth. The Self cannot be attained without practicing truth. Suffering is the result of false relationships, false fears, false ideas. Liberation is truth.

How is this liberation realised? Through right action of mind, speech and body. That is *jnana*, that is freedom, that is *moksha*. Self enquiry is constant truth. Maintaining the quest even in the midst of worldly duties ensures right action.

>This vichara – what a way! It changes everything in full.<

Everything is changed… Nothing is changed. When *vichara* becomes constant all actions continue but without expectation. Initially there is effort… this is surpassed by spontaneity.

>But I meet difficulties over difficulties. There is the strong thought: forget about vichara, you are not ripe enough, you are not strong enough for this path, this is only for very advanced, do something else but not vichara. […] I want to return to "normality", but the door behind is already closes. No return possible.<

The less 'productive' ego becomes, the more it screams for attention. *Vichara*, *prapatti* and *vairagya* are the counters.

>Then this awakening of all kinds of energies. I was never interested in kundalini-experiences and third eye experiences etc. – but now I have them.<

All these are 'experiences' which ego can cling to and claim for itself. Remember the seer alone.

>And all kinds of desires come up, the whole life story, forgotten things come up.<

Indeed. Ego asserts its life. This way it attempts to define its existence. But… it is totally dependent on the Self. There is no independent existence for it. Leave the relative, abide in the Self. Consider that ego is born and dies daily… the Self is always.

>No, this path is not easy! Without Guru's guidance it is impossible. At the moment it is mostly struggle.<

Guru's guidance is given. It needs to be listened to with the Heart not the mind. The mind is nothing. The Heart is all. Surrender the struggle too.

22/6/2002

From an intellectual/relative point of view, the concept 'I', as 'subject,' cannot exist without its corollary concept 'object.' Maharaj [Nisargadatta Maharaj] and Maharshi might discuss it in slightly different ways, but surely the gist is the same.

In any case, one feels as intuition that innate consciousness, which is not dependent on these concepts (but on which these concepts are totally dependent), e.g., consider the common experience of the innate, intuitive happiness of deep sleep. Everything traces back to this.

From [David Godman's] 'Be As You Are' (p. 48): "Sri Ramana maintained that this tendency towards self-limiting identifications could be checked by trying to separate the subject 'I' from the objects of thought which it identified with. Since the individual 'I'-thought cannot exist without an object, if attention is focused on the subjective feeling of 'I' or 'I am' with such intensity that the thoughts 'I am this' or 'I am that' do not arise, then the individual 'I' will be unable to connect with objects. If this awareness of 'I' is sustained, the individual 'I' (the 'I-thought) will disappear, and in its place, there will be a direct experience of the Self. This constant attention to the inner awareness of 'I' or 'I am' was called self-enquiry (*vichara*) by Sri Ramana, and he constantly recommended it as the most efficient and direct way of discovering the unreality of the 'I'-thought."

Nisargadatta says, "Too much analysis leads to nowhere. There is in you the core of being, which is beyond analysis, beyond the mind. You can know it in action only. The legitimate function of the mind is to tell you what is not.

But if you want positive knowledge, you must go beyond the mind." (Nisargadatta: I Am That, 70, p. 325)

26/6/2002: Attention and intention

>*What is the functional relationship between attention and intention?*<

Intention (goal/purpose) – Liberation through Self-Realisation. It is said by Sages such as Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi that this is possible … now. This, then, takes root … and grows.

Attention (method, path) – Fixed on the Self. This is the method. With attention focused on the Self, the fictitious 'other' disappears… then That, Self alone, remains. This is the true 'experience'.

From Talk 266: "The real Self is the infinite 'I'-'I', i.e., 'I' is perfection. It is eternal. It has no origin and no end. The other 'I' is born and also dies. It is impermanent. See to whom are the changing thoughts. They will be found to arise after the 'I'-thought. Hold the 'I'-thought. They subside. Trace back the source of the 'I'-thought. The Self alone will remain."

If intention and attention are right… where is the room for polemical discussions on thoughts and free-will?

1/7/2002 Light

jyotishAmapi tajjyotistamasah paramucyate /
jnAnam jneyam jnAnagamyam hrdi sarvasya vishThitam //

"Light of lights, beyond the darkness, He is called; true knowledge, that which is to be investigated, understood through knowledge, abiding in the Heart of all." (Bhagavad Gita, 13.17)

That, which illumines all of this, is Light. Its nature is *satya* (Reality), the Self-luminous, Light of Consciousness (*cidAbhAsa*). As the sun illuminates the world, so the Light of lights (*Atman*) illuminates the mind and senses. As the eye cannot see without the light of the sun, so the intellect cannot function without the Light of the Self.

It is said that the sun does not shine there, nor do the moon and the stars, nor lightning nor fire. All the lights in the universe cannot be compared even to a ray of this inner light of the Self. Conceptual twaddle falls away in obei-

sance to this Light of all. Take to *Vichara* and merge yourself in this constant, eternal light of lights, the light of the Self.

Blazing, Sri Arunachala, a seemingly insentient hill, silently representing *Siva*/*Paramatman*, reveals the mystery of the Self to one who enters through the fire of *Vichara*.

6/7/2002: Mantra

>So I have been wasting all my years of repeating the "I Am" practice and refusing all thoughts except the "I Am" thought and feeling? Was Nisargadatta only talking to the one he was having a dialogue with and not all those who would read it in later years, like myself? Nisargadatta also said that it is the Guru's words and not the Guru. Please advice this possibly disgruntled earnest seeker.<

Nisargadatta was told, by his guru, Sri Siddharamesvar Maharaj, to repeat the mantra *'aham brahmAsmi'*. If Nisargadatta has told you to repeat the words 'I am', who am I to argue? Here there are no mantras and certainly no whispering of such things in ears. Better to keep quiet... do nothing, but abide as 'I am'!!

7/7/2002

>I also agree with you perception of the two-step process. Inquiry starts with the mind, then moves past it.<

While this may be argued from the theoretical standpoint, in order to draw attention to misplaced identity, it has no substance in reality. Even to say that Self Enquiry has one step is to miss the point. When the Self is sought, the mind is nowhere. *Atma Vichara* is process and goal. Absolutely nothing happens without the Self. Realisation is to get rid of the delusion that you have not realised. The Self is always realised. This is not dependent on any theoretical school of thought, whether *advaita* or *dvaita*, nor with any practice. It is simply the true state of affairs.

8/7/2002

>In principle you are correct but this is generally not how practice progresses.<

The point made is simply that while practice is all important, if one clings to any intellectual idea of 'progress' or steps within the process, there is self-entrapment in the net of degrees of growth etc. There is absolutely no linear progression. The idea of steps is only in the mind. This is the experience here. All practice is simply a rehearsal for the spontaneous, absolute enquiry which is our nature. In spontaneous enquiry there is neither step, progression nor movement. There is only the Self. Practice *Vichara*, until it becomes automatic throughout life, but leave open the door to spontaneity (effortlessness). This is Grace.

9/7/2002

>Certainly my teacher, who teaches 'no-creation' (so therefore there is nothing to attain and no one to attain it), teaches of the need for practice.<

Indeed. Practice is essential (*abhyasa vairagyabhyam* – by practice and non-attachment). The mind must grow 'strong', practice is the means. Through continued strength of practice, the mind begins to fly to *Vichara* at every opportunity. This is what is meant by 'automatic'. Like a man with his head held under water longs for air, so the mind, as soon as distracted by the lures of the world, must immediately seek *Vichara*. With practice that which once, apparently, took intense effort becomes effortlessness.

>He also teaches that practice mainly consists of eliminating the erroneous ideas (super-impositions) that show up as identification with the world or body or senses or prajna or mind. When all these are removed, then the seeker will be able to identify as, to stand as, Being-Conscious-Bliss.<

Neti neti – not this, not this – while useful, this tends to be an intellectual practice. On this Sri Ramana has said:

D.: "I begin to ask myself 'Who am I?', eliminate the body as not 'I', the breath as not 'I', the mind as not 'I' and I am not able to proceed further."

M.: "Well, that is so far as the intellect goes. Your process is only intellectual. Indeed, all the scriptures mention the process only to guide the seeker to know the Truth. The Truth cannot be directly pointed out. Hence this intellectual process. You see the one who eliminates all the 'not I' cannot eliminate the 'I'. To say 'I am not this' or 'I am that' there must be the 'I'. This

'I' is only the ego or the 'I'-thought... Therefore seek the root, question yourself 'Who am I?'; find out its source." (Talk 197)

>In my own experience, not until I choose to practice regularly did much deep progress occur.<

It must go beyond choice. It must become a necessity.

>I have also heard Nome[1] warn against negating the need to practice by use of nonduality as an idea rather than as where one actually stands.<

Indeed. The idea 'non-duality' is only valid as opposition to 'duality'... neither has anything to do with the Quest, Being.

>In terms of Ramana's recommendations on negation (neti, neti), I repost from 'Who am I', paragraph 3:

"Therefore summarily rejecting all the above-mentioned physical adjuncts and their functions, saying 'I am not this; no, nor am I this, nor this' – that which remains separate and alone by itself, that pure Awareness is what I am. This Awareness is by its very nature Sat-Chit-Ananda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss)."

This seems to fit with what my teacher says about the importance of eliminating the illusion to clear the field for the Real.<

Indeed, I don't see any disagreement here, the point being that the understanding that comes from '*neti neti*' remains mindstuff without the quest 'Who am I?'As a preliminary understanding it is indeed helpful. In the ultimate analysis, however, to say 'I am this' or 'I am not that' remains in the realm of limitations.

In Sri David Godman's 'Be As You Are', chapter 6 gives numerous examples of this very important point. Later in the text you have quoted, there appears the statement, "Since every other thought can occur only after the rise of the 'I'-thought and since the mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts, it is only through the enquiry 'Who am I?' that the mind subsides." (from 'Who am I?') Even the affirmation 'I am *Brahman*' or the negation 'I am not this body'

[1] a North American *Advaita* teacher

leaves the 'I' who makes the declaration... Who is it? Ultimately, once again, we are led to the investigation of the Self. This is the point.

10/7/2002

>But what Miles was stating is that practice isn't necessary and that inquiry should be spontaneous or random which is something different.<

Enquiry is deliberate... never random. Practice is all important. Spontaneity (unforced, natural) is manifestation of ever flowing Grace when strength of mind ensues. Then that which has taken effort becomes effortless.

17/7/2002

>I validate this Ramana Guru Bhakti faction.<

They are all valid (*bhakti*, *jnana*, *karma*). While the teachings of the sages are suited to time, place, and other considerations, in the end, all leads to the place where, having abandoned *lokavichara*, one submits to *Atma Vichara*.

18/7/2002

>What is lokavichara? I am not sure I understand your point right.<

Lokavichara is paying attention to the world of externals rather than holding the substratum of the 'I'. Whereas Atma Vichara opens the 'secret' of the Self and reveals that the world is unreal apart from the underlying Reality.

9/8/2002: Humiliated

>I am turned out of a restaurant for being inappropriately dressed. (Not classy enough). I feel angry and humiliated. What are the reasons?<

The arising of thoughts in the individual is the sole disturbance. Self Enquiry is the way to restore harmony.

>My ego says I am a part of this group with my class, my money, and my intellect. When I am denied, I feel insecure. If I do not belong here where do I belong. I react to this. Who is this waiter to say I am not a part?<

In response to someone who wished to reform the world and eradicate caste distinction (after a long conversation) Sri Ramana said: "Why do you go to

places where such distinctions are observed and cause pain to yourself? Why should you not seek places where they are not observed and be happy there?"' (from Talk 507)

21/8/2002

"Love and devotion to him [Ramana] are a bridge across the abyss to salvation. He had many devotees for whom he prescribed no other path..." (Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-knowledge, p. 146)

"There have been Saints who have promised to return to earth for the renewed guidance of their devotees in life after life, but Sri Bhagavan was the complete *Gnani* in whom there is not even that vestige of an ego that may indicate rebirth, and the devotees understood this. His promise was different. 'I am not going away. Where could I go? I am here.' Not even 'I shall be here' but 'I am here', for to the *Gnani* there is no change, no time, no difference of past and future, no going away, only the eternal 'Now' in which the whole of time is poised, the universal, spaceless 'Here'..." (p. 191)

It is not just those who were with Him at Arunachala who continue to feel His presence. Some have told of reading about *Atma Vichara* after His death (without knowing He was no longer embodied) and yet they felt His ever-present guidance. Some have turned to Him with full knowledge of His *mahasamadhi* and they too received guidance and continue to do so. This is the nature of *Bhakti*. *Bhakti* is the stirring of that innate Self, dwelling in/at the Heart of all. If 'others' do not accept this... so be it.

24/8/2002

>After reading this story and some other messages, I am surprised to see how some disciples stated Ramana Maharshi to get "angry" for being served more curry than the rest, of for seeing fights between his disciples. Isn´t an enlightened being supposed to be over low emotions like anger? Isn´t this our goal in the spiritual search? I´m not trying to attack anybody, it´s only a question I would like to ask.<

The *jnani's* anger is anger without attachment. It remains uncultivated. It equates to the anger one might feel towards the finger which just poked its own eye.

30/8/2002

>Another friend at another forum has asked if i might know where to find what the actual words in either Sanskrit, Tamil or Hindi that Sri Ramana used for the words "real" and "truth."<

Perhaps *'satyam'* (or '*sat*') would be an appropriate term in Sanskrit.

satyam eva jayate nAnritam

Truth alone triumphs, not falsehood.

(Mundaka Upanishad, 3.6)

30/8/2002

>Sometimes clinging to experiences and reminiscences happen. This trance stuff and panic attacks are really only rubbish, one of many experiences.<

Who panics? The ego. It is good to notice such things. But as you mention not cling to them. Of course admission that ego (who can panic) exists, gives the impression there are two selves. Very tricky. In deep sleep, 'you' are there but ego is nowhere to be found. Upon waking, ego and body arise and then fears, doubts, panics appear. As you say, this is rubbish, mindstuff, distorted perspective. The same Self was there all along. In reality ego is totally dependent on the Self. Why therefore devolve authority to one who is totally reliant on 'You' (Self).

11/9/2002: Yoga - the heart of all things

>If anybody can find a quotation in which Bhagavan tells people to deliberately focus attention on the right side of the chest as a technique, I would be fascinated to see it. I don't think I've ever seen one.<

In 'Self Enquiry' Bhagavan states, "The loci that are eminently fit for meditation are the Heart and *Brahma-randhra* (aperture in the crown of the head). One should think that in the middle of the eight-petalled lotus that is at this place there shines like a flame, the Deity which is the Self, i.e. *Brahman*, and fix the mind therein. After this, one should meditate." (Collected Works, p. 22 f.)

Elsewhere, in this text, the location and various revelations on Heart are also given.

12/9/2002: Self Enquiry and the heart

>In this teaching I have not seen any emphasis on the 'Heart.' Inquiry is described as 'formless.'<

Formless/formfull who cares? These dichotomies will resolve themselves.

Sri Ramana has said: "The source of the 'I' is the Heart – the final goal." The easiest and most direct, "the first and foremost step to be taken", is enquiry. If one is not suited to *vichara*, other means, such as meditation on a 'centre' or '*neti neti*' or *pranayama* etc., are adopted initially. The Heart is the Self. That is the source of the mind. All else is mere polemics.

>I spent several years using the right-hand-side-of-the chest 'Heart centre' as a focus in my inquiry. Certainly, the sensation from this centre is the most constant 'sensation' that comes from this body.<

The irresistible pull of the Heart is not a sensation of the mind. It is the supreme continuity. While it can appear physical, it is not reliant on the physical. It is not objective. It becomes apparent when the contents of the mind dissipate, when ego begins to lose hold. It is the original expression of Self. If one can take to Self Enquiry this is the inevitable result.

Sri Ramana once said that He "... could feel the action of the physical heart stopped and equally the action of the Heart centre unimpaired. This state

lasted about a quarter of an hour." Apparently "... some disciples have had the privilege of feeling Sri Bhagavan's Heart centre to be on the right by placing their hands on Sri Bhagavan's chest." (from Talk 403)

>When I ask questions to Nome about my practice, he has been generally encouraging – as long as it gets to "Who am I?" Indeed. This is the crux. I write this as a seeker, though, not as one who stands in Self-Realization, so much of my knowledge is 'indirect' (that is, through indirect means such as the mind). Ramana taught from 'direct' knowledge. Nome teaches from 'direct' knowledge.<

Direct/indirect – it makes no odds. Claims to directness or indirectness just exacerbate the problem for the seeker. All that is necessary is to take to *Atma Vichara* ...

12/9/2002

>1. Trace the I-thought to its source. 2. All thoughts vanish. 3. A throb arises from the Heart centre. 4. Watch that place.<

Indeed. This is exactly what happens.

12/9/2002

>If a person tries to focus on the Heart centre before it announces itself with the sphurana, then they may imagine a Heart centre. Instead of falling into the real one, they may imagine something. Then they focus on that imaginary something. It remains an object and their sense of subjecthood remains intact. In other words, they end up doing the kind of meditation that's common in Tantric Yoga and Tai Chi.<

This is not a problem. One might surmise that this instruction was indeed given to Arthur Osborne, and he in turn relates it to whoever is interested. The focus is designed to eliminate extraneous thought. The Enquiry then catches the one who focusses. Not all *sadhakas* are necessarily given the same practice. Different folk, different capacities. But... it is all *Vichara* in the end.

16/9/2002

>About the Heart: The reply from Bhagavan you have quoted (Ganesan: Moments, p. 53) says, that when the throb from the Hridaya manifesting as I-I arises "watch wherefrom this sphurana arises and wait attentively and continually for the revelation of the Self." The throbbing of the Heart is an experience which can be bodily felt. But this is also only an experience, right?<

Sphurana is neither physical nor spiritual (and neither is it not physical nor not spiritual). It is neither light nor sound, although it may be explained as either (or both). It is the missing link (if ever such a link was missing) between the Self and ego. "It is related to the physical but is itself not physical." It defies description. It is of the nature of intuition. It is the manifestation of Self in the body. It is the primary experience.

>So attention should not be on the experience itself, which is only a sign, but on the source of I-I? This is meant with "wherefrom this sphurana arises"? But the source of I-I can only be the pure Self.<

Indeed. If it is observed as an experience… it has lapsed into memory (thought). The *sphurana* itself is a continual spontaneous manifestation of the Centre of Supreme Consciousness (*hridaya*), the Self. As such, it is directly intuited as 'I'-'I'. There is neither subject nor object here. It is the innate call of the Self… and the Self itself.

>If the throbbing of the Heart is felt or not is also not of such importance then, right?<

Right!!

>And the sensation will vanish later on again also? So the throbbing is only the beginning of the revelation of the Heart, the Self, only a sign, right? And the revelation will be done by the Self itself. So now we just have to wait attentively and patiently. Then what happens further and if it happens can only be mere grace. Then here all effort come to an end.<

It's like the bugler announcing the arrival of a great person. When you hear the sound, you know the dignitary is close behind. However, it is more than a sign; it is a guarantee. Whereas the bugler announces another… the Self announces itself. All effort ends here. Once heralded, it is soon self-revealed.

Then the 'I'-thought falls away in *hridaya*, and 'I'-'I' manifests automatically as awareness.

>About sleep: You said vichara should be a continuous day and night – so in all states. This is only possible when it is during waking already a continuous or mostly a continuous. Then naturally it will also be during sleep. Then vichara must be as natural and necessary as breathing.<

Indeed. This is so.

19/9/2002

>You say it's a guarantee. This means trust should be 100%, right?<

Indeed. Here *Bhakti* meets *Jnana*.

TOTAL, absolute surrender to the unchanging, eternal consciousness which underlies all names and forms, is required. Trust is essential. His compassion (Grace) will then sweep all thoughts of other away.

21/9/2002: Diving Into the Heart

>I also recall another statement in talks - but I cannot find it at the moment - that meditation on the right side of the chest is useful for those who want to know what stillness is .Of couse we all agree that the Heart has no location , but the right-side of the chest plays some part in his teaching and as an aid for meditation.<

It may be Talk 131 that you are indicating:

"Of course there is also the practice of meditation on the heart-centre. It is only a practice and not investigation. Only the one who meditates on the heart can remain aware when the mind ceases to be active and remains still; whereas those who meditate on other centres cannot be so aware but infer that the mind was still only after it becomes active again."

21/9/2002

>Here for reaching the Heart breath control is also suggested as a means. I would appreciate it if any one has any practical advice on this practice. The Ashram published a book called 'The Technique of Maha Yoga'. It suggested focussing on the Heart centre on an exhalation after breath retention. I pre-

fer focussing and diving on the retention. What do others find best for them?<

When talking about *samadhi*, Sri Bhagavan spoke of "...the stillness of a waveless ocean..." (Talk 406) What a wonderful expression! When the breath comes under control, this 'stillness' is experienced. Control can be forced, as in various 'hatha yoga' practices, or spontaneous as mentioned in Sri Ramana Gita, chapter 6:

prANarodhaSca manasA prANasya pratyavekSaNam /
kumbhakam sidhyati hyevam satatapratyavekSaNAt //

"Control of the breath is attention to the flow of breath by the mind. In this way, through constant attention, *kumbhaka* [retention of breath] is accomplished."

Mind and breath spring from the same source, so controlling one automatically controls the other. However, in practice, constantly watching the breath seems to be easier, and more efficacious, than forcibly controlling it. I seem to remember Sri Bhagavan compared the two methods to the milking of a cow. The first is to cajole the cow by feeding her grass and gently patting her back, and the latter is to forcibly milk her, whether she likes it or not.

Those who have used both methods have reported that there may be a danger of falling into *laya* (unconsciousness) when using forcible control, therefore nullifying any subsequent Enquiry. Whereas simple attention (*pratyavekSaNa*) when coupled with *Atma Vichara* results in *kumbhaka* and the *sphurana* arising spontaneously from the Heart (with or without physical manifestation). It seems the gentle cajoling method is Sri Bhagavan's first recommendation and hatha yoga methods are recommended for those who are unable to achieve *kumbhaka* (which is nothing more or less than *sahajasthiti* – abidance in the Self) this way. It certainly is the method used here.

22/9/2002

>Now in inquiry I look for something that is constant that is within. This is more formless, and yet goes deep. What is constant is "The unknown Knower of all the known."<

Unheard, unspoken, unseen... yet heard, spoken of, even seen... oh Arunacalaramana, such dichotomy?... Oh Lord...how can I express such things... ? Who am I? Who am I? Who am I?

22/9/2002: Every moment is good for *atma vichara*

For practising *atma vichara* every day is auspicious and every moment is good - no discipline is prescribed at all. Any time, anywhere it can be done, even without others noticing that you are doing it.

Every moment of every day is spent in *atma vichara*... every moment of every day... yet still there are those who ask why realisation remains unfulfilled...?? Oh Ramana please answer!! Oh... Ramana why...? Why...? Why...? Is it so difficult?? You have said that realisation is the easiest thing!!

22/9/2002

>*Is anyone here competent to judge who has and who has not realized the Self? If no one can say, then whether or not one has knowledge of the Self is irrelevant. If someone says "I have realized the Self" shall we take them at their word and give mor credence to their views?*<

Probably not!! Oh… Probably not!!

He who has realised the Self sees only the Self. Where is lack of knowledge?? Where is non-realisation?? Nowhere to be found!

September 2002

[*Atma Vichara* is] never monotonous… but rather the *sruti note* underlaying all. *Atma Vichara* is everything. If we can make it a growing part of our day… wonderful. Effort seems to transform into effortlessness. We have to work at it until one day, we realise, the 'effort' has vanished. Silence is our true nature.

2/10/2002: *Vichara* – with or without an end?

[The conversation was about 'Hunting the "I"' by Lucy Cornelssen.]

>*Posting from Hunting the 'I' turns out to be very interesting. She gives many good hints of approach.*<

Very interesting, yes – but at last – there is now no need for this all anymore. Some of what she describes here was once done. Now practice has become very simple. There is only one "approach" left, which sets in naturally most time. Only permanent watchfulness is needed – the rest is done by itself.

>*You speak of atma vichara, which in due time becomes a permanent, a continuous. This seems to be somehow slightly different from what Ramana says: "If once realisation arises there is no further need to enquiry."*<

There is no contradiction. Many people look for an end to *vichara*. This is counterproductive. At the risk of over-analysis and giving the idea that there are stages, one might say – first there is *vichara* with effort (set times like sitting meditation), then *vichara* on autopilot (which still takes a little effort), which cuts in whenever the mind wanders, and then finally *vichara* that becomes an effortless constant; the pull is irresistible. (At this point, who is there to even think of asking the question?) There is no doubt, that seeking stops, and when it stops there is no more doubt.

19/10/2002: *Vichara* from the beginning?

>*Is vichara possible also for a weaker mind or must the mind already has to be very strong and one-pointed (i.e. sattva) for starting with?*<

The alternative is *Bhakti*. Sri Bhagavan has recommended *Bhakti* for one who is not temperamentally suited to *Vichara*. By *Bhakti* is meant devotion to an ideal (such as God, Guru, etc., which results in absolute surrender). So one might object… what about meditation? Well…meditation is one-pointed attention on a single thought. If one feels capable of such a thing… why not take to *Vichara*, which is one-pointed attention directed at the root of one's being? *Bhakti*, also, is one-pointed attention focused on our ideal. So where is the problem? The problem is in the mind, which declares there is a problem. Any mind can take to *Vichara*… now… at this very moment! Sri Bhagavan out of compassion, mentions these alternatives.

"*Bhakti* and Self-Enquiry are one and the same. The Self of the *Advaitins* is the God of the *bhaktas*." (Talk 274)

>*So far I understand Ramana vichara can be done from the very beginning and will lead naturally to a clear (sattva) mind. So to develop a strong (one-pointed) mind vichara is the best practice there could be. Then with that*

vichara will deepen. So vichara is the beginning, the middle and the end of practice. Is this right?<

This is right. Ultimately all must come to Enquiry. This is confirmed by Sri Ramana and others too. *Vichara* can be started while doing other 'practices'. Eventually only *Vichara* will remain. If one wishes to meditate at set times, do so… but for the rest of the day, when it is noticed that the mind wanders, take to *Vichara*. There are no hard and fast rules.

>When reading about Lakshmana and Sarada (No Mind, I am the Self[1]) – do you know this book? – one of course comes to another view sometimes, as Lakshmana often states that vichara is only for the very ripe, and for most people other practices have to be done first. If this is simply adopted it works discouraging as it signals that only the very advanced can start with vichara.<

I have read only what has been posted on the various lists or elsewhere on the net. Lakshmana says this for his particular audience. Why accept it? Try and find out. Who declares who is and who is not ripe? Here Hatha Yoga was done, at set periods, for many years, because it was said that it should be done, and it appealed. Various experiences happened. All the time, *Vichara* was also done during everyday life. While walking about, at work, talking with friends etc. This kept the mind seeking its source. Eventually, after many years, only *Vichara* (with the occasional *japa*) remained. Try it and see! Why accept defeat or make the presumption that one is unfit? Who is qualified to make such an assertion? All are fit to dive into the depths of the Heart. Now… this very moment! This is our *svabhavana* (innate nature).

October 2002: 'I'-'I'

>Now I notice that Bhagavan is quoted here as saying "Aham Aham."<

Had the quotation been "*Aham Aham*" it might have been translated as "I am I", however, the quotation is "…*'Aham' 'Aham'*…" ('I'-'I'). There seems to be no room for ambiguity here. Further, Sri Bhagavan has clearly stated that "thoughts must cease and reason disappear for 'I'-'I' to rise up and be felt. Feeling is the prime factor and not reason." (from Talk 24) And

[1] Godman, David; Lakshmana, Sarada: No Mind, I am the Self: the lives and teachings of Sri Lakshmana Swamy and Mathru Sri Sarada, Nelore Dist., 1986

"That which is, does not even say 'I am'. For, does any doubt rise that 'I am not'?" (from Talk 197)

The Self does not say 'I am' but rather that is the eternal state of the Self. 'I'-'I' is a representation of that which exists prior to linguistic phenomenon. This representation, 'I'-'I' signals that which is neither spoken nor thought of. It is the Ultimate Universal into which all cognitions are resolved. As such, 'I am I' exists only in the linguistic realms of *vaikhari* (audible and articulate speech) and perhaps in *madhyama* (form of thought with no definite word presence), where it is possible to preserve the differentiation of subject/subject or subject/object.

At this point, I am reminded of another of Sri Bhagavan's statements, recorded in Talk 519, which seems pertinent here: "The *mahavakyas* and their interpretation lead to interminable discussions and keep the minds of the seekers engaged externally. To turn the mind inward the man must directly settle down in the 'I'. Then there is an end to external activities, and perfect Peace prevails."

October 2002

'I'-'I' is the unspoken point from which all language begins and also the point to which all language returns. This is the sequenceless, non-differentiated, natural state (*sahaja*), Language is solely dependent on this 'I'-'I'.

The Grammarian [Bhartrhari] has said that *Sabdapurvayoga* ultimately leads us to this Inner Word (*sahaja*). Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi has said that *Atma Vichara* ultimately leads us to this (*sahaja*) state. Both are in full agreement.

"In the course of tracing ourselves back to our source, when all thoughts have vanished, there arises a throb from the *Hridaya* on the right, manifesting as '*Aham'* '*Aham'* 'I'-'I'. This is the sign that Pure Consciousness is beginning to reveal itself. But that is not the end in itself. Watch wherefrom this *sphurana* (throbbing) arises and wait attentively and continually for the revelation of the Self. Then comes the awareness, oneness of existence." (from a reply, approved by Bhagavan, which was sent to an English devotee, recorded in 'Moments Remembered' by V. Ganesan, p. 53)

When, through Self Enquiry, brought about by intense practice, thoughts finally subside, there stands revealed an unbroken, eternal awareness. Without feeling this 'I'-'I','I'-'I' must remain mere words.

"Thoughts must cease and reason disappear for 'I'-'I' to rise up and be felt. Feeling is the prime factor, and not reason. (from Talk 24)

"That which is does not even say 'I am'. For, does any doubt arise that 'I am not'?" (from Talk 197)

October 2002: Doubts

All doubts come from ego. Some have reported that they are pulled from one philosophy to another, then another and then back to the first philosophy again. This happening over and over again. The ego gets carried away with the thought that the grass is always greener on the other side. If one must explore various philosophies and teachers do so while understanding there is only one Self… and that is your true nature. The key is *atma vichara*.

"Unless you exist you cannot ask questions. So you must admit your own existence. That existence is the Self. It is already realised. Therefore the effort to realise results in your realising your present mistake – that you have not realized your self. There is no fresh realisation. The Self becomes revealed." (from Talk 625)

>Yes, the mind is the problem – I am more and more tired of it.<

The mind and problems are all ego-based. Who becomes tired of it? Inevitably only the ego. Ego creates doubts and problems in order that it retains the importance to overcome its problems.

3/11/2002: Reality and dream

>Since vichara is done earnestly the world and myself appear more and more like a dream. It is what I am not – similar as in neti-neti. This impression becomes sometimes very strong. The world loses its colour, its smell, its taste – as the senses are somehow withdrawn. Interest in objects leave. Sometimes I am about to lose body awareness. Before that the world and myself appeared to be very real. Reality – dream – are not both equally only

impressions of the mind? Is the last one not only the reversal of the first one? Both have to be overcome equally by atma vichara, right?<

The feeling of separation between 'I' and other is the problem of the seeker. To understand '*neti-neti*' as recounted in the *Upanishads* is one thing, to then spend one's time repeating "I am not this" over and over again is quite another. The object of *sadhana* is to halt the externalising mind. All that is observed is a dream, whether in the waking state or the dream state. Who observes? Both 'states' are unreal with reference to Reality. The *Jnani* sees only the Self and all in the Self. The example of the screen perhaps pertains here:

There is a screen. On that screen first a figure appears. Before that figure on the same screen other pictures appear and the first figure goes on watching the other pictures. If you are the screen and know yourself to be the screen, is it necessary not to see the first figure and subsequently pictures? When you don't know the screen, you think the figure and pictures to be real. But when you know the screen and realise it is the only reality on which, as substratum, the shadows of the figure and picture have been cast, you know these to be mere shadows. You may see the shadows, knowing them to be such and knowing yourself to be the screen which is the basis for them all.

>So this neti-neti as an experience of the mind will also subside like the previous recognition of the world and myself as real? Both is duality, isn't it?<

Indeed. Who declares "I am this" or "I am not this"?

>When the point is what this 'I' is, the Self must reveal itself as One in All.<

This is *Bhakti* and ultimately comes about through Surrender.

11/11/2002

This passage was posted some time back on Ramana Maharshi list, in a conversation we had. Perhaps it helps the search for a quotation in which Sri Bhagavan ... "tells people to deliberately focus attention on the right side of the chest as a technique".

"In the course of tracing ourselves back to our source, when all thoughts have vanished, there arises a throb from the *Hridaya* on the right, manifest-

ing as '*Aham'* '*Aham'* 'I'- 'I'. This is the sign that Pure Consciousness is beginning to reveal itself. But that is not the end in itself. Watch wherefrom this *sphurana* (throbbing) arises and wait attentively and continually for the revelation of the Self. Then comes the awareness, oneness of existence." (from a reply, approved by Bhagavan, which was sent to an English devotee; recorded in 'Moments Remembered' by V. Ganesan, p. 53)

This is a clear statement... or is it? In any case, it is the experience of some who practice *Atma Vichara* that their irresistible pull to a specific point, namely the *Hridaya* on the right side, results in a 'deliberate' watching, followed by a spontaneous revelation. Even after such an episode the throbbing can (but does not always) continue for a time. As far as this being a technique... who knows? It certainly 'could' be taken for one.

Earlier in this same statement it is stated... "If by meditation or *Vichara* we attain to our centre, the *Hridaya*, and thus are our real Self, we enjoy unalloyed bliss."

Hridaya is described in various ways in this piece... i.e. 'the seat of God in us', 'the seat of Pure Consciousness', 'different from the physical heart', 'has its being on the right side and is not commonly known or felt', 'the literal, actual, physical seat of the intuition of the Self.' It goes on to say '... the word 'physical seat' may create some confusion of thought. What it really means is that there is a centre of Pure Consciousness in the physical body. It is related to the physical but is not itself physical. This is experiential. Perhaps one should just take to *Atma Vichara* and find out for oneself. Whether one starts with attention focussed on the *Hridaya* is immaterial. It is certainly not a necessity for *Vichara*. However, it has been said that it is an inevitable conclusion.

15/11/2002: The 'I-I' in the Heart

"The state of the *vijnana*, when it pertains to the Self and is manifest as a form of the Self, is said to be the 'I'-manifestation. This manifestation cannot take place apart from the Real (i.e. the Self). It is the manifestation that serves as the mark for the direct experience of the Real. Yet, this by itself cannot constitute the state of being the Real. That, depending on which this manifestation takes place is the basic reality which is also called *prajnana*." (Self Enquiry (Vichara Sangraham), transl. Mahadevan)

>Mahadevan even translates it ['I-I'] as "form of the Self". Can anyone go closer in that?<

'I-I' is used to explain something in words which is, in fact, the very substrate before which, and upon which words depend. Hence the Grammarians, such as Bhartrhari (5th Century-ish), were able to put forward Grammar as a *Darsana* (philosophical system) which leads to *Sabdabrahman*/*Moksha*.

23/11/2002: Non violence

>The first progress that one witnesses in spiritual sadhana is that one tends to be extremely nonviolent. One avoids violence in thought and word also. If that is not achieved, there is no progress at all.<

Indeed. Through the growing knowledge of the unity between *Jivatman* and *Paramatman* the distinction vanishes, whose then is the violence and upon whom is it inflicted?

>Even Brunton was not spared [from violence]. May be there were some differences in some quarters [with the Ashram].[1] *But can we ignore what Brunton did to bring Bhagavan's grace to several devotees who would be deeply indebted to him. He did wonderful service to spiritual world through his book.*[2]*<*

Indeed. This devotee is indebted to Sri PB. His books were invaluable.

>Hope the forum will be used to spread spiritual fragrance and not otherwise.<

As the Heart-Lotus unfolds and blossoms, the Fragrance is unmistakable! The best fertilizer is surely the warming ray of *Bhakti* and the best weedkiller, why... *Vichara*,... of course.

[1] This refers to the disputes Paul Brunton had with the ashram's administration.
[2] Paul Brunton's 'A Search in Secret India', publ. 1935 was the first book through which readers in the West came to know Ramana Maharshi and it became a classic.

24/11/2002

>What are we to do who crave the darshan of Sri Ramana but were not fortunate to receive it? All these darshan stories[1] are nice but sometimes make one feel we need a live guru to give transmission.<

Darshana of Sri Bhagavan is available here and now. He it is who abides as *saccidananada* in the Heart of all devotees. There are those who testify to this. Grace (and *darshana* is nothing but Grace) "always is, and is not given... If it is external then surely it is useless." Grace is the Self. Remembrance of Bhagavan... is to have His *darshana*.

24/11/2002: Bliss

>I wondered how to use Bliss in inquiry?<

In the course of conversation with Swami Yogananda and party present, the following ensued, it might pertain:

D.: "How to get Bliss?"

M.: "Bliss is not something to be got. On the other hand you are always Bliss. This desire is born of the sense of incompleteness. To whom is this sense of incompleteness? Enquire. In deep sleep you were blissful. Now you are not so. What has interposed between that Bliss and this non-bliss? It is the ego. Seek its source and find you are Bliss.

There is nothing new to get. You have on the other hand, to get rid of your ignorance which makes you think that you are other than Bliss. For whom is this ignorance? It is to the ego. Trace the source of the ego. Then the ego is lost and Bliss remains over. It is eternal. You are That, here and now. ... That is the master key for solving all doubts. The doubts arise in the mind. The mind is born of the ego. The ego rises from the Self. Search the source of the ego and the Self is revealed. That alone remains. The universe is only expanded Self. It is not different from the Self." (Talk 106)

>To me it is Peace, others might say Bliss.<

[1] This refers to the *darshan* stories of the devotees who had met Ramana.

Indeed. The Bliss of Peace. When thoughts dissipate and peace of mind ensues the innate state remains... untroubled, full of the Bliss of Peace. (cf. Talk 326)

28/11/2002

>A strange thing is that when Vichara becomes an earnest practice the mind starts to trouble enormously. This is so here with me. The mind is sometimes so much agitated, that one really wonders how this practice should be done. Mind-stuff is coming up enormously. But what I remember is, that Bhagavan has said, that this is normal. Vasanas come to surface. So that's ok.

Sadhu Om somewhere said that this is the grace of the Guru. Vichara seems to be a very powerful cleansing process, something like the purgatory in Christianity, not pleasant for the ego. Somewhere I have read that Vichara is bliss from beginning to the end. I can't agree. It is a hard graft, that's for sure. Peace will then set in more and more, but purification has to happen first.<

I'm maybe pretty stupid, but it seems that there is an inordinate desire to create something complicated out of something which is inherently extremely simple. The problem is mindstuff (thought chasing thought, becoming tied up in more thought and adding to the bundle of thoughts already thought, all being dragged around in a little car behind oneself, or before oneself) and the solution is halting it.

To halt mindstuff Self Enquiry is employed. Self Enquiry is simply becoming aware of aberrant thought and asking to whom it appears. This is it. All the rest is more mindstuff. The increased activity in the mind is a misnomer. All that happens is awareness of the absurdity of thought becomes heightened. If one practices, Self Enquiry cuts in more and more often, feelings of peace increase (i.e. there is the realisation that mind doesn't need to pander to incessant thought, thought becomes a clutter) and eventually it goes on all day, all night. Until... something happens... ego comes up against its worst fear... annihilation. For me it was a bang on the head followed by a continual beating and a quick rush in the ambulance, during which there was resuscitation, followed by a few days in hospital.

2/12/2002: Pulsation – *sphurana*

>What I want to ask you or anyone on this group is: What would be the danger of meditation on the right side of the heart before one gets that pulsation? So many devotees seem to be doing it without any downside that is evident. I notice that I have to put my attention somewhere even when it is attempting to be on the sense of conscious presence so why not direct it where the Self emanates in the body?<

There was a conversation mid September on RM list about *sphurana*. Maybe that's what you remember. The message you refer to was 12th September.

>The sage said, "as you imagine it so it happens". Does not imagination propel us to realize the Self? Surely it would help concentration.

Surely, it is not imagination but Truth which motivates Enquiry!

>All life seems to be imagination so why not direct it towards its source?<

Indeed. Direct towards the source otherwise there's no end to imagination.

2/12/2002

>When you are doing Self Inquiry and a bright light is turned on in the room, are you aware of it?<

So long as you see a bright light, enquire as to who sees it. Self Enquiry is continual. It is done throughout the day, all the times, in all places, as long as such questions arise. Then limitation is eliminated. The whole world is the one Self.

"Even the ignorant man sees only the Self when he sees objects." (from Talk 145)

>Do you meditate with your eyes open? If yes, then where is your gaze? The same question if you practice with your eyes closed. Where is your gaze?<

For enquiry, on the source of thoughts. This is the point, Then the world is seen as it is. Gaze where you will 'externally' as long as the 'I'-thought is held.

D.: "What is to be meditated upon?"

M.: "Anything that you prefer." (from Talk 371)

7/12/2002

>*What about transmission, or diksha, or the power of the presence, or whatever we should call it? Many people experienced deep states of quiet, samadhis, kundalini activity, etc., in Bhagavan's presence that didn't occur when they were away from him. Isn't this something useful that only a living Guru can provide?*<

If by 'living' embodied is meant, then surely that is simply an enforcement of the 'I am the body idea'. Guru is eternal. Surrender is the key to eternity. In the presence of the Sage, indeed, there appears to be less mindstuff. However, when mindstuff dissipates, everywhere is the presence of the Sage.

Avadhuta's story shows us that, for one surrendered to the Lord, all is the Lord's Grace, all is the Lord's *diksha* (whether seen as human or otherwise). There is never any intervention, as such. The real teacher is one's very own Self. To believe otherwise is like joining the stars to make a picture.

As for Bhagavan's presence, the presence of the Self, it is as vibrant now as it has always been. Can it be limited by time or space?

8/12/2002

>*But are you suggesting that these facts imply that a person shouldn't bother to sit in the physical presence of a sage's body if a glimpse of the Self can be obtained that way? I don't think these things are incompatible.*<

An apparent thorn to remove an apparent thorn in an apparent dream. Wonderful.

>*"This-man-is-a-walking-Upanishad-quality".*<

This is great. Please excuse the wordplay, it's the linguist in me. "Walking-*Upanishad*" (*Upanshad* lit. means sitting down near) so… one who walks about while already sitting down near (the object of search?). Kinda like the person who wanders around looking for their glasses all the while wearing them to aid the search. Or the man who goes around from house to house, lamp in hand, looking for a light for his pipe. The search seems pointless… but in the end there is an apparent dawning of realisation. The realisation that what was needed was there all along!

8/12/2002

>As I come to understand vichara can only be done or not be done – there is no "between". A clear decision is needed. So, response is "Yes".<

Indeed. Mindstuff obstructs the innate peace. *Vichara* restores it. Then the transient mind rests in the Heart.

31.12.2002

Questioner 1: >Oral questions and answers may appear to benefit the questioner and a few listeners in this hall, but actually they obstruct, delay and interrupt the silent communication of thought waves to thousand of spiritual aspirants all over the world.<

Questioner 2: >This gives the impression that people should not ask questions to Ramana. So perhaps some context missing or whatever. Ramana's highest teaching was in silence, but he always willingly answered all questions if earnestly asked.<

The proximity of the Guru removes irrelevant questions by simply reducing them to the common denominator. Until the disciple is prepared to surrender his questions, made up of the curiosity of mindstuff (ego), and adding to the mindstuff cart, can he remain quiet?

"Reality is simply the loss of ego. Destroy the ego by seeking its identity. Because the ego is no entity it will automatically vanish and Reality will shine forth by itself. This is the direct method. Whereas all other methods are done, only retaining the ego. In those paths there arise so many doubts and the eternal question remains to be tackled finally. But in this method the final question is the only one and it is raised from the very beginning. No *sadhanas* are necessary for engaging in this quest." (Talks 146)

5/1/2003

>Since practice of vichara has been started there is an immense urge to bring things in order – also very old things.<

The quest for the source of the mind must go deep. Like the pearl-divers, all should be discarded except the source of the quest.

All is always in order. Who am I or you to believe otherwise? Still *atma vichara* brings 'problems' into focus. These problems can be attended to with mind intent on its source.

>*My friend is very sick. Some nights he can't sleep at all because of pains.*<

What a shame! I emphasise with him. In deep sleep bliss is the norm, it recharges the battery. We all long for it. For the individual though it is attained in ignorance (*tamas*). We must dive beneath the three phenomena of wakefulness, dream and deep sleep and realise that which manifests the phenomena. This is liberation from bonds.

[The questioner reports some family problems.] >*Perhaps it is more possible that the Himalayas will sink in Lake Constance than that my father and my mother will find inner peace about the past.*<

Peace is ever there. Judgements cloud it over. Wherever the Heart is sought, there is Arunachala. Most families have similar problems. One, or all, of the following are normally the cause of the problem: passion, anger, greed, attachment and pride. That has certainly been seen here. Only one party needs to be affected for all problems to begin and only one party needs seek release for all problems to vanish.

>*There are no visions of Ramana or light or sound arising.*<

Any vision implies a seer. While visions of *Vishnu* or Ramana might be a wonderful phenomenon, indeed, the seer remains to be found.

>*Sorry, I am a little bit talkative today.*<

It's OK. Anytime. They say, 'I am a good listener.'

7/1/2003

>*Where will this 'I' land up if not at the feet of Bhagavan? May he destroy it then.*<

The 'I' is already destroyed. Path and goal are one and the same. As when the electricity is switched off the fan continues to revolve for a short while… so is it with *Vichara*. The thoughts are cut off but their effect appears to continue for a short while.

13/1/2003

There is only one Teacher – *saccidananda*. You can get human gurus by the millions, plenty of people want to be or claim to be a teacher. Where are the disciples? They seem to travel aimlessly from guru to guru, without really listening, I call them spiritual tourists, their egos are sometimes happy, sometimes sad, when sad they complain about the price, when happy they pay double!!) It seems all these gurus who teach have missed the point!!

31/1/2003

>There is some risk, though, for a seeker without a teacher. The risk is that the seeker's own ego may direct (and limit) the practice. Also, as you say, there is risk from the 'sharks swimming in the ocean.'<

Perhaps one needs to understand and trust that everything unfolds exactly as it should. That the sharks swimming in this ocean are in fact akin to tiddlers; both share the ocean and rely on it for their sustenance. Ego only appears to direct the practice. When the practice matures, there never was an ego. This is part of the mystery, part of the quest. One can end up in deep, dangerous water with or without a teacher. It really doesn't matter. The best idea is to make a sincere effort to learn to swim (or rather dive) oneself. Then if the teacher's swimming is just theoretical, there's no problem. And if another teacher is needed, that teacher will be there. But this desire for association, this separation, the human condition, is the problem. If one clears the mind, then there can be no false sage. If one truly loves the Sage as our very Self, everything spontaneously falls into place.

2/2/2003

>I practiced Vichara continually. While walking or even while talking. This had also been my habit with mantra. I would keep my mantra constantly every moment of the day.<

This is wonderful. *Vichara* may be done even when engaged in work, indeed at all times. As Sri Bhagavan said: "Now what is your real nature? Is it writing, walking, or being? The one unalterable reality is Being. Until you realise that state of pure being you should pursue the enquiry. If once you are established in it there will be no further worry." (Talk 596)

Didn't Sri Bhagavan declare: "*Vichara* is the process and the goal also. 'I AM' is the goal and the final Reality. To hold to it with effort is *Vichara*. When spontaneous and natural it is Realisation." [Talk 390]

It seems that often the practice is limited only to allotted times, what a shame!

I was intrigued by your reference to your local mountains and Sri Arunachala. In Edinburgh this is a regular topic of conversation. Surrounded by hills one can not get very far without seeing one. Although they do not have palm trees (and at present they are covered in snow) it has long been the habit here to suggest that the local hills remind one of Sri Arunachala. Originally the idea was a spontaneous occurrence when travelling to work. Now its like the doctor who told his patient not to think of a monkey when he took his medicine or it would be catastrophic. Of course the patient thereafter thought of a monkey. Similarly here it seems devotees find it difficult to look at the surrounding hills without thinking of that embodiment of Self - Sri Arunachala. This is great *sadhana*.

7/2/2003: *Sabdapurvayoga*

[About the term "*aham*"]

>Miles knows much more than I do about Sanskrit terms and may like to give his view.<

'I am' in many Scottish dialects is pronounced more along the lines of 'Ah um' with more or less stress on the aspirate (or with glottal stop in place of aspirate), remarkably like the Sanskrit *'aham'* which means not only 'I' but also 'I am' (the verb 'be' omitted but understood). As to direct correlation, linguists, I am sure, will disagree on that one.

That's as it may be... however... Ultimately it's the source of the one who makes/uses/accepts arbitrary connections that is sought. If we accept language as a fallen (*apabhramsa*, a form which is corrupt in regard to the original) system, as the Grammarians (such as Panini, Katyayana, Patanjali and Bhartrhari) have stated, then perhaps we could move back up the vibratory scale to something 'purer' such as the Sanskrit phrase *'koham'*. This might add the perception of an esoteric level to the language. And from there further back to the very substrate of language. Ultimately in *Sabdapuravayoga*

(union with that which was before words) we can understand that all sound, all signs, ultimately come from and refer to *Brahman*. The mindstuff of which this universe, beginning with the ego, is made, loves the arbitrary, it revels in it.

The sequence moves outwards from *pasyanti* (Self as *Sabdabrahman*) through *madhyama* (subtle thought) and becomes vocal as *vaikhari* (spoken language, internal or external). The reversal of this sequence is akin to *atma vichara*.

The resounding of 'I', 'I' in the Heart is Self or *'Brahman*, which is without a beginning and an end, the essence of language, the imperishable syllable (Om), from which the world-process "appears to unfold through a transformation into objects." (Bhartrhari)

This apparent transformation (no more than a mirage) takes the form of the arbitrary signs we call language. The use of the question 'Who am I?' simply redirects the attention to the Source of this manifestation/transformation.

8/2/2003: *Sabdapurvayoga*

>Is there a parallel between the first set (pasyanti, madhyama, vaikhari) and the second set (nada bindu kala)?<

Indeed. These terms, *nada bindu kala*, of course, can be linked to Om (sound and form). *nada*, the resounding vibration, becomes *bindu*, a seed, which offers up *kala*, a sprout... and that is how the universe is manifested. (Occasionally *nada* and *bindu* take different places according to commentators.) Always the path out is, of course, the surest way to trace back to the starting place. There are also interesting *Nathyoga* meditations based on sound (*nada*).

Another parallel (with *pasyanti* etc. and Om) is that of deep sleep, dream sleep, and waking state. (And even *Brahman*, *Isvara* and *Jiva*.) The traces are everywhere... all we need do is follow them to the source.

9/2/2003

In terms of the True Source of 'I am' there is no doubt that it is the innate reality which eternally resounds from the Heart. This is not dependent on

any spoken language and needs no reconstruction. It is Self-evident. It is *sahaja* (the innate state). That Self Enquiry is the ultimate solution to the human condition, there is no doubt.

14/2/2003

>Is not Vichara bhakti to the Self, surrender to the source? Can it be seen like this?<

Indeed. Complete self-surrender is not different from *Atma Vichara*. The *bhakta* wanders through this world thinking only of Him. The anguish which arises if he were to forget for even a second is such that he immediately re-directs his attention to the Source of his affection. The true *bhakta* lives in a world of pure love where selfishness (or ego) is no more than a wispy cloud which is easily evaporated by the sun (of Devotion).

16/2/2003: *Sabdapurvayoga*

>Am I right in understanding that 'Sabdapurvayoga' is this yoga of atma vichara described above?<

It is a shame you cannot just pop in. Bhartrhari's *Sabdapurvayoga* is a popular topic of conversation here. Unfortunately, other than this, I only know of the mundane attempts at analysis of the subject performed by a few academics. In reality, *Sabdapurvayoga* is a living, dynamic method of touching the Source in everyday life. Here are a few words about *Sabdapurvayoga,* thanks for asking:

The key to the elusive *Sabdapurvayoga* is revealed in Bhartrhari[1]s (the great Grammarian) statement that tad dvAramapavargasya... "It (Grammar) is the door to liberation", and this door, or gate, is the primary appearance of the *ahamkara*, ego-sense, from *Sabdatattva* or *Sabdabrahman.* The *Veda* (this includes all the scriptures of the seers, a seer being 'one who is liberated') is the perfect example of externalisation of *Sabdabrahman* which, despite the divisions of gross language, and because of the nature of the intuition of the great seers, has retained the ability to act as a true representative of that One, which always remains unaffected by apparent fragmentation and therefore a suitable means for attaining *Brahman*. The words of the seers are like conduits which constantly, and self-evidently, relay back to the source.

At a 'personal' level language operates in exactly the same way. The way out is inevitably the way back. The path is well trodden but neglected and taken for granted. In the normal course of the day words spoken travel out, and words heard travel in. But it is, indeed, possible to travel 'in' at all times. *Brahman* is *eka,* and does not change, yet through the auspices of *kAlaSakti* (*Brahman's* power of Time) it is conceded that the differentiated world emanates. This emanation (or 'apparent emanation') is produced by and produces the sequence of words and thoughts. The instantaneous understanding 'I am', which lies self-evidently at the 'Door', then becomes plotted, the 'Centre without circumference' becomes located in space. Predicates then abound. "... celebrated as neither more nor less than One, (it) becomes fragmented because of recourse to (its denotating) potentiality. Although undifferentiated, it behaves as if differentiated because of its (denotative) potentials." (Vakyapadiya, 1.2) 'I' points to something, other than itself, and names it.

The essence of language is *Brahman* and it is through the auspices of language that 'naming' takes place. *Brahman* names *Brahman*. For example, when I talk about 'my' hand I do not have to sever it first, although in giving it a denotation I impose a certain otherness to it. Similarly *Brahman* neither changes nor divides when it is named. Even the name used is *Brahman*, *akshara*, the imperishable syllable, in the ultimate analysis known as '*Om*'.

"*Vishnu* is seated with *Vishnu*,
Vishnu is feeding *Vishnu*;
(*Vishnu* is eating *Vishnu*)
Why do you laugh, O *Vishnu*?
Whatever is, is *Vishnu*."[1]

[1] This refers to a story told by Ramakrishna. "There was a holy man who used to live in a state of ecstasy and would not speak with anyone. He was regarded as a lunatic. One day having begged some food in the village, he took his seat by the side of a dog and fell to eating. A strange sight now presented itself and attracted a crowd of spectators, for the holy man would put one morsel into his own mouth and the next into that of the dog, so that the man and the beast went on eating together like a pair of friends. Some of the spectators began to laugh at the holy man as being a mad fellow. Thereupon he said, "Why do you laugh? *Vishnu* is seated with *Vishnu*; *Vishnu* is feeding *Vishnu*; Why do you laugh, O *Vishnu*? Whatever is, is *Vishnu*." (Tales and Parables of Ramakrishna, s. https://vivekavani.com/vishnu-everywhere/)

Sabdapurvayoga reveals an understanding of the true nature of language and the subsequent liberation (*moksha*), which naturally pertains to such understanding reveals our true identity. In the ultimate analysis all words refer to *Brahman*, as *Sabdabrahman*. This appears to be the force of the following *karika*: "Therefore that which purifies the word is attainment of the Supreme Self. He, who knows the truth of its origin, attains the immortal *Brahman*." (Vakyapadia, 1.131*)*

Sabdapurvayoga describes the goal while all the while remaining as the means. I trust this wee introduction helps.

11/3/2003: Quiet is boring?

Boredom?

Boredom is mindstuff! The one who is bored is the very problem. Without him how could there possibly be boredom? This is the human condition. Comparisons between this and that, between activity and boredom. There is absolutely no boredom in awareness. You decide that there must be something more interesting to do and declare yourself bored. This is not awareness. This is mindstuff. Simple pandering to the monkey-mind. If one attends to Self Enquiry throughout daily life, rather than just at times of seated meditation, this is very easily overcome, without loss of 'entertainment'. Self Enquiry is vibrant, never boring. It efficiently eliminates the one who is bored!

13/3/2003: The Eka Sloka of Ramana Gita[1]

>Page 12 in the 2nd and 3rd Editions of Sri Ramana Gita published before Bhagavan's Maha Nirvana there is a small note in brackets below this (the Eki Sloka -Verse 2 Ch 2 of Ramana Gita). This reads,

"There are three aids for reaching the Heart

1.One pointed mind by the quest within [Jnana]

2.Diving deep [Bhakti]

[1] 'Eka Sloki' refers to verse 2.2 of the Ramana Gita by Ramana Maharshi.

3.Control of breath [Yoga]

They are according to the temperaments of the individual."<

Of course there are those who would declare that only two paths are mentioned in the hridayakuhara madhye verse. And Bhagavan in His inimitable way declined to contradict this view even supporting it in the Telugu version, 'diving by seeking Self or diving by breath-control.' (as mentioned in 'Moments Remembered')

6/4/2003

[The talk was about the five sheaths of the body.]

>1. Annamaya kosa: The physical body (also called sheath of food)

2. Pranamaya kosa: Sheath of prana

3. Manomaya kosa: Sheath of Mind

4. Vijnanamaya kosa: Sheath of intellect

5. Anandamaya kosa: Sheath of Bliss, also known as the "Causal Sheath.<

One must not be swayed by the appearance of the word *'ananda'* here, otherwise we are sucked into unnecessary controversy. This has been well discussed in the various commentaries, by various schools of thought, on Brahma Sutras 1.1.13 forwards (verses specifically dealing with *'Anandamaya kosa'*). Interpretation of the following word *'maya'* being the problem. In *Sankara*-school "is kAraNaSarIra (the causal frame). It is the bliss sheath that immediately conceals the Self! It is pseudo-bliss, characterised by the state of deep sleep. As the innermost 'sheath' it is directly responsible for *avidya* (nescience). Each of the sheaths falls away in sleep until the state of deep sleep remains. This is the causal state. This is bliss in ignorance. This too must go.

>The blank place people find in meditation is Anandamaya kosa. This is known by the meditator, so there is one who knows. Who is that?<

Indeed. Bhagavan says, "'I' is beyond the five sheaths."

9/4/2003

>That what I have called 'surrender' is only more or less an 'outfit' of ego and not yet true surrender. It is most important to recognise.<

Initially, surrender might be an act of ego. As throughout life, when noticed, *Atma Vichara* solves that problem. The biggest problem, if indeed it is a problem, is the association with the corruptible and acceptance of the corruptible as incorruptible. There is only one knowledge of worth, and that is the knowledge which reveals one's original state. What most teachers teach is '*mogha-karman*' – 'useless action'. What can one do? No one really wants the Truth. Often the Truth is even dismissed as too simple! Well… it is that simple. Philosophies, words can indeed be fun, and their source is the most wonderful. All comes from and ends in that Self-same source.

All the philosophical conundrums that are created in the name of *vichara* should be ignored. *Vichara* does solve the problem of the human condition. There are those who would testify to this. Association (*satsanga*) with them is of great help.

18/4/2003

The human condition occurs when one individuates and sees oneself as separate from *Brahman* (the Self). Man's struggle for release is thwarted so long as he claims birth, death, and reincarnation, within the limits of waking, dream and dreamless sleep as his own. 'I am', the blissful Self, is the natural experience which transcends ego, mind, intellect and senses. I exist as the Self of the universe, the universe exists in Me. "I am the Self, dwelling in the Heart of all beings, I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings." (Bhagavad Gita 10. 20)

"To enquire 'Who am I?' really means trying to find out the source of the ego or the 'I'-thought. You are not to think of other thoughts, such as 'I am not this body, etc.' Seeking the source of 'I' serves as a means of getting rid of all other thoughts. We should not give scope to other thoughts,... (such as 'I am not this mortal body' or 'Why has God created this world?'],... but must keep the attention fixed on finding out the source of the 'I' thought, by asking (as each thought arises) to whom the thought arises and if the answer is 'I get the thought' by asking further who is this 'I' and whence its source?" (from 'Who am I?')

18/4/2003

The practice of *kundalini*-yoga, as of any other yoga, is based on concentrated imagination. One may fix one's attention on any of the centres, such as the one between the eyebrows. This is *bhavana* or imaginative contemplation. The final result is that the object on which the aspirant fixes his mind ceases to exist as distinct and separate from the subject.'

And the following from Sri Bhagavan, in response to a question as to whether the place between the eyebrows could be the seat of the Self:

"You agree that the Self is the ultimate source of Consciousness and that it subsists equally during all the three states of mind. But see what happens when a person in meditation is overcome by sleep. As the first symptom his head begins to nod; but this could not happen if the Self were between the eyebrows, that centre cannot be called its seat without implying that the Self often forsakes its own place which is absurd. The fact is that the aspirant

(*sAdhaka*) may have his experience at any centre or *cakra* on which he concentrates his mind, but that does not make such a centre the seat of the Self.

What is true of *AjnA*, the centre between the eyebrows, is also true of *sahasrAra*, the brain-centre. If one concentrates on the *sahasrAra*, the ecstasy of absorption (*samAdhi*) will follow. But this state is not permanent, because the latent tendencies (*vAsanAs*) are not destroyed. ... He has to continue his endeavour to eradicate his *vAsanAs."* (from Mahadevan's 'Ramana Maharshi, the Sage of Arunachala', p. 167-168)

I would add that the Heart is the ultimate Centre and only by reaching this can *samAdhi* become permanent. The source of the *aham-sphurana* is the target... "When thus attended to, Self, the reality, alone will remain shining in the centre of the Heart as 'I am I'."

22/4/2003

>There is a discussion about calling all sadhana "looking for being saved", or looking for a "state" vs understanding: lead by Judi Rhodes who is a selfproclaied Realized being, but her background is no sadhana and she advocates against meditation and all yoga.<

This reminds me of something Bhagavan said in Talk 41:

D.: "J. Krishnamurti says, 'No guru is necessary?"

M.: "How did he know it? One can say so only after realising but not before."

The same applies here. One might say no *sadhana* after realising but not before."

Perhaps one might consider the problem of SAkhAcandrAyah - 'the bough and the moon.' To point out the moon one might first point to a branch and then suggest that the moon is hanging from the end. If we then remain totally enammoured with the branch we have missed the point. Similarly when sadhana becomes all in all and the reason for beginning *sadhana* is forgotten then *sadhana* has been of no use. To listen to Bhagavan again: "*Sadhanas* are needed so long as one has not realised it. They are for putting an end to obstacles. Finally there comes a stage when a person feels helpless notwithstanding the *sadhanas*. He is unable to pursue the much-cherished *sadhana*

also. It is then that God's power is realised. The Self reveals itself." (from Talk 647)

>I thought, that one arrives to the RIGHT understanding by doing vichara and sadhana; fine-tuning the intellect making it able to carry the "Realized Understanding" when it comes.<

It is certainly the case that, without right understanding, the moment is missed. Although the sun is there and very bright, to see it directly you must turn and look.

14/5/2003

>Take Ramana and Nisargadatta. It took great will power to experience the pain they had from cancer. In my view it was their mega will powers that enabled them to attain the "Silence of the Mind".<

"If you proceed on the notion that health of the body is necessary for health of mind, there will never be an end to care of the body." (Ramana)

Identification of the body with the Self (or Self with body);
Differentiation of the Self from the world;
Differentiation of one being from another;
These are the stumbling blocks.

>Can there be a mind without a body? I don't think so! So your quote is incomprehensible from that standpoint.<

Find the real nature of the mind. Then you will know there is no such thing. Don't bother… and the body identification continues.

29/5/2003

>When I try to find the source of the 'I' thought, I find that in my case it seems to be located in the head and not on the right side of the Heart. And if I try to locate the 'I' in the Heart, I find that the 'I' in the head is trying to monitor the progress of the one in the Heart to see if he is securely resting there. Now there cannot be two 'I's. If I try to investigate, I find that the 'I' in the head is the witness of the one in the Heart. That does not seem alright because it is contrary to Ramana's teaching. Has anyone faced a similar

problem or can anyone with more experience in Self Enquiry offer me some help? Many thanks and regards.<

This is indeed an interesting question and one that *sadhakas* often shy away from asking. Perhaps because the answer can be construed as the proverbial slap in the face.

Often investigation is made in the mind and remains firmly rooted by the 'I'-thought itself. *Ahamkara* [the I-sense] survives through objective association. Looking for a location stimulates this. If you perceive 'I' anywhere, then there is subject-object association. The Self is not dependent on location. There should be nothing associated with the Self. Instead, investigate what the mind is and it will disappear. Other than thought there is absolutely nothing that can be called mind. Mind is dependent on the arising of the primary thought 'I', alone. This 'I'-thought must be uprooted. Your 'I' in the head and 'I' in the heart are both symptomatic of the primary 'I'-thought. If this was not the case, then the above question would not occur. It is common to intellectualize the process of *Vichara* without realising it. Instead, one must be open to Grace. Ask the question... don't look for an answer. Consider the physical terms head and heart to be arbitrary; they have nothing to do with *Vichara* and everything to do with polemics. *Vichara* attracts polemical discourse. This is, of course, mindstuff.

The quest is of sole importance. Any answer that comes to mind when the question 'Who am I?' is asked... must be enquired into. All thoughts must vanish... "In the course of tracing ourselves back to our source, when all thoughts have vanished, there arises a throb from the *Hridaya* on the right, manifesting as '*Aham' 'Aham'* 'I'-'I'. This is the sign that Pure Consciousness is beginning to reveal itself. But that is not the end in itself. Watch wherefrom this sphurana (throbbing) arises and wait attentively and continually for the revelation of the Self. Then comes the awareness, oneness of existence." (Moments Remembered, p. 53)

When *aham sphurana* arises from the still depths of the Heart, when this spontaneously happens, there may indeed be a sensation on the right side of the chest. However, the location head/heart is not important for *Vichara*. *Aham sphurana* is the trumpet call of the Self.

With practice, *Vichara* becomes the default situation throughout the day and night. It goes on during conversation, at work, in times of abstract silence. Then success is assured.

25/8/2003

>*Surely vichara along with such devotion would be divine. No scholarship or intellectual training appear necessary for vichara. Who am I, the devotee? Am I apart from Him, who is purnam?*<

Indeed.
And so simple.
No need for speculative philosophy.
No need for pseudo-advaita.
Just enquire 'who am I?'
This is itself pure devotion.

28/8/2003

>*[U.G. Krishnamurti says:] "[...] The Sanskrit word 'maya' does not mean illusion in the same sense in which the English word is used. 'Maya' means to measure. [...]"*<

When we look at a mountain from different viewpoints the resultant descriptions of the mountain may seem to be totally out of whack. That *maya* might be said to indicate 'measure' is indeed correct. This measuring occurs because of the perception of self and other. Indeed this is exactly what maya (the human condition) is... me here, that out there, and the repeated attempts at qualification and of course the inevitable polemics.

The solution, surely, is Self-enquiry.

29/8/2003

>*The question is: Is Bhagavan's teaching not enough? Need we always look for something else? Each time afterwards I have found this to be a waste of time.*<

Sri Ramana's teaching is, without doubt, enough. However it is in the interest of the ego to perpetuate the search by looking and comparing, evaluating the worth of various religions, philosophies etc. This ensures its survival by

giving purpose to its existence. This comparison (or measuring) is *maya*. It is often the case that the seeker finds that s/he goes round in circles revisiting various philosophies one by one, again and again, at regular intervals. It is part of the human condition to believe that the grass is always greener on the other side.

30/9/2003: Self can be experienced

The Self is the primal experience. This is the only real experience. All else is modification, imagining, built on a false premise.

"There is no one who even for a trice fails to experience the Self." (Talk 97)

>I am sure 'experience' is NOT the word Sri Ramana used. Simply because, 'experience' as generally understood implies the existence of the trio – experiencer-experienced-experiencing.<

Why should the word 'experience' be problematic? It occurs throughout advaitic literature. If it is problematic, it is only because of the inadequacy of language and our semantic preconceptions. Below are a couple of examples which immediately spring up. 'Ordinary' experience is *viparIta* (different from real).

"The thought 'I', 'mine' erroneously imposed on the body and senses, which are not the real self, must be removed by the wise, by abiding as the real Self." (Vivekacudamani)

Experience implies '*trayi vidya*' (the triad) only after the arising of ahamkara ('I', 'mine' etc.). The Self experiences itself eternally. However, the mind trying to experience the Self is like the image in a mirror declaring its self-existence and that it is the one experiencing the origin of the image. The mind's experience is of the triad... and this is falsehood.

"The duality of subject and object and the trinity of seer, sight, and seen can exist only if supported by the One. If one turns inward in search of that One Reality they fall away. Those who see this are those who see Wisdom. They are never in doubt." (from Forty Verses, 9)

"An illness is not cured just by saying the name of the medicine without drinking it, and you will not be liberated by merely saying the word 'God', without direct experience (parokSAnubhavam)." (Vivekacudamani, 62) The

direct experience reconciles the experiencer, the experienced and the experiencing.

"That we experience (*anubhUyate*) the bliss of the Self free from the senses in deep sleep is verified by the scriptures, by direct [self-evident] experience (*pratyaksham*), by tradition and by deduction." (Vivekacudamani, 107)

The word '*sAkshAt*' is used by Sri Maharshi in Ramana Gita, 2.2. This refers to direct and Self-evident experience which is not reliant on anything other than itself.

"In the inmost core, the Heart
Shines as *Brahman* alone,
As 'I'-'I', the Self aware
Enter deep into the Heart
By search for Self, or diving deep,
Or with breath under check.
Thus abide ever in *Brahman*."

>One should not translate 'literally' what the great one says.<

There is nothing cryptic about the Maharshi's words. That is their beauty. Attempting to interpret in terms of the triad is the only mistake.

From Talk 78: "Everyone has experience of the Self every moment of his life."

Instead of analysing and discussing this, we should investigate this mindstuff and find its source. The Elimination of this non-self reveals the Self, which, being always self-evident, will shine forth of itself.

1/11/2003: *Kevala kumbhaka* (retention of breath)

>In 'Self Enquiry', it is mentioned that 'kevala kumbhaka' is/can be an aide to inquiry – sounded as if it were a breath-exercise. Does anyone know how to do this? Thanks<

In Talks 448 Bhagavan gives a description of *kumbhaka*, as it pertains to *Vichara*.

"*Naham* – I am not this – corresponds to *rechaka*
Koham – Who am I? (search for the I) – corresponds to *puraka*
Soham – He am I; (The Self alone) –- corresponds to *kumbhaka*.

So these are the functions of *pranayama* [breath-control].

Again the three formulae are:

Na - Aham (Not - I)
Ka - Aham (Who - I)
Sa – Aham (He - I)

Delete the prefixes and hold on to the common factor in all of them. That is *Aham* – 'I', that is the gist of the whole matter."

For the *jnani*, *kevala kumbhaka* (retention alone) is quite simply spontaneous abidance in the Self. This retention is the natural conclusion of discrimination and enquiry. On the face of it, the *jnani* appears to breathe like anyone else; however, his mental stillness indicates *kevala kumbhaka*, as *antah pranayama* (internal breath control) as opposed to *bahih pranayama* (external breath control). The latter is mentioned here and there in the literature, in chapter 6, Mind-control, of Sri Ramana Gita for example. However, even here where hatha yoga breathing ratios are mentioned, it is pointed out that *jnanis* define *rechaka* as giving up the 'I-am-the-body' idea, *puraka* is the quest for the Self and *kumbhaka* is abidance in the Self or *sahaja sthiti*. *Antah pranayama* is undoubtedly the preferred method for those who can take to it. If not, then simply watching the breath will suffice to bring about spontaneous *kumbhaka*. Or constant association with enlightened Sages. Or repetition of mantras. Finally, if none of the above are possible, then hatha yoga breathing might be tried under supervision.

24/1/2004: Your own actual experience

>I would like to read anyone's own actual experience /feelings/etc. which follows the question: "What is the origin of the I?" What happens to you? Where do you go? What's it like? How does it feel/look/sound/taste/etc. in your own personal words like "I feel/felt..."? Please state the exact sequence of events/feelings/thoughts, etc. that you, personally, experience/encounter after the question about your/the I.<

Is this a philosophical enquiry, or is it an enquiry into actual practice? If the latter, then I would respond that during the practice of enquiry any answer/experience/feeling/etc. has validity only as a conduit to further enquiry into the 'I'. Whether the ego screams and thrashes in the throes of its annihilation or basks in its perception of the 'bliss of the Self' the enquiry must continue. Whether I declare (to myself) my identity in relation to family, friends, home, love of life, health etc. or profess a knowing oneness enquiry must continue. Whether fear or joy at this time go off the scale, the experiencer must be enquired into. As long as 'I' experience, this is the time for intense Self Enquiry. When quest for 'I' is finally discovered to be as valid as the mythical haggis hunt – who is left to discuss the 'actual experience/feelings/etc.'?

>What happens to you?<

You follow the same fate as me and he etc. When the sense of 'I' arises, so too do the other persons, when the sense of 'I' is extinguished, the other persons are also lost.

>Where do you go?<

I, he, you etc. are resolved as Self alone. If this is not the case, then the enquiry remains ongoing.

>What's it like?<

It's like cooking skirlie.

>How does it feel/look/sound/taste/etc.?<

As the feel/look/sound/taste/etc. of successful skirlie cooking is skirlie-like alone, so the feel/look/sound/taste/etc. of 'it' is to itself.

>In your own personal words like "I feel/felt..." please state the exact sequence of events/feelings/thoughts, etc. that you, personally, experience/encounter after the question about your/the I.<

In proper Enquiry there is no sequence of thought other than the reiteration of the enquiry, for as soon as any thought/feeling etc. arises 'I' ask 'myself' the question "To whom does this thought (feeling etc.) arise?" and scythe it down. What the thoughts, feelings etc. are is unimportant... What is important is the continuous remembrance of the enquiry into 'my' thoughts.

4/2/2004: Awareness watching awareness

>Hi, I joined this group because I believe the best way to progress in the practice of Atma Vichara is by sharing our ideas and experiences on the subject. Well, I think the members of this group are perhaps aware that even when Lord Ramana was alive the practice was not clearly understood by even those living in the ashram. So there are many different views on what the practice is. I don't wish to start a debate on the subject but I'd like the members of this group to help me out.

First of all, there are some who say Atma Vichara is "awareness watching awareness" but others claim that one's attention should be fixed on the one who is watching. According to Humphrey's, who was very close to Ramana, he was personally advised by Lord Ramana to fix one's attention on the one who is watching. Those were Humphrey's exact words.

I'd like the members of this sangham to tell me from their own experience which is the more effective technique. I think those who practice the Vichara need to share their ideas and experiences on a regular basis. Further, I'd like to know what Sadhu Om, a realised devotee of Lord Ramana, meant by self- attention in his book 'The path of Ramana'. I've been practicing the Vichara for over 4 years. The Vichara has helped me in dealing with my day-to-day problems and trials quite competently, but my spiritual life needs a boost for me to be really happy. So help me improve my technique in doing the Vichara. You may even write to me personally. I'd love to hear your personal opinions of what you think the Vichara is!<

>I'd like the members of this sangham to tell me from their own experience which is the more effective technique.<

The following is, for me, the most effective technique of *Vichara*. It became a constant companion.

From 'Who am I?':

10. How will the mind become quiescent?

By the inquiry "Who am I?" The thought 'Who am I?' will destroy all other thoughts, and like the stick used for stirring the burning pyre, it will itself in the end get destroyed. Then, there will arise Self-realization.

11. What is the means for constantly holding on to the thought 'Who am I?'

When other thoughts arise, one should not pursue them, but should inquire: "To whom do they arise?" It does not matter how many thoughts arise. As each thought arises, one should inquire with diligence, "To whom has this thought arisen?" The answer that would emerge would be "To me". Thereupon if one inquires "Who am I?", the mind will go back to its source; and the thought that arose will become quiescent. With repeated practice in this manner, the mind will develop the skill to stay in its source. When the mind that is subtle goes out through the brain and the sense-organs, the gross names and forms appear; when it stays in the Heart, the names and forms disappear. Not letting the mind go out, but retaining it in the Heart is what is called 'inwardness' (*antar-mukha*). Letting the mind go out of the Heart is known as 'externalisation' (*bahir-mukha*). Thus, when the mind stays in the Heart, the 'I' which is the source of all thoughts will go, and the Self which ever exists will shine. Whatever one does, one should do without the egoity 'I'. If one acts in that way, all will appear as of the nature of *Siva* (God)."

Here are some useful hints shared by devotees who lived with Bhagavan:

In 'Moments Remembered' Sri Sadhu Natananda, author of 'Spiritual Instruction' and longtime resident in the vicinity of the Ashram, relates (p. 5): "On one occasion, I asked Bhagavan the right method for *Atma Vichara* and He replied: (i) "At any time and under all circumstances one should unfailingly remember one's real nature (I AM). (ii) While remembering this as one fulfils one's obligations in the world, one will do it without the least attachment to actions done, or to their results. When this attitude is strengthened the aspirant feels assured that he is making progress in his *sadhana*. (iii) This attitude should be practised by all."

Again from 'Moments Remembered' (p. 77), Sri M.G. Shanmugam relates: "He (Bhagavan) once said categorically: 'For practising *Atma Vichara* every day is auspicious and every moment is good, no discipline is prescribed at all. Any time, anywhere it can be done, even without others noticing that you are doing it. All other *sadhanas* require external objects and congenial environment, but for *Atma Vichara* nothing external to oneself is required. Turning the mind within is all that is necessary. While one is engaged in

Atma Vichara one can with ease attend to other activities also. ... With attention focussed on the first person and on the Heart within, one should relentlessly practise Who am I? When this is done one-pointedly, one's breathing will subside of itself. During such controlled practice, the mind might suddenly spring up; so you have to vigilantly pursue the *Vichara*, Who am I?'"

>First of all there are some who say Atma Vichara is "awareness watching awareness" but others who claim that one's attention should be fixed on the one who is watching. According to Humphrey's who was very close to Ramana was personally advised by Lord Ramana to fix one's attention on the one who is watching. Those were Humphrey's exact words<.

There is absolutely no need to enquire into the Self, the Self is ever aware, but there is every need to enquire into the ego-self. The 'one who is watching' is indeed the upstart who needs attention. Bhagavan is very clear that in the enquiry, 'I' refers to the ego. As long as someone claims 'awareness' for themself, there is a question begging.

"Mrs. D. said there were breaks in her awareness and desired to know how the awareness might be made continuous.

M.: 'Breaks are due to thoughts. You cannot be aware of breaks unless you think so. It is only a thought. Repeat the old practice, 'To whom do thoughts arise?' Keep up the practice until there are no breaks. Practice alone will bring continuity of awareness.'" (Talk 628)

Awareness watching awareness is 'I AM' awareness. This is a reflection of awareness in consciousness, also known as the witness consciousness. 'I AM' or 'I'-'I' (*aham aham*) sits at the threshold and is the expression of the pure mind, consisting of the primary thought, alone. When the mind looks outward, the *kArakas** are used to explain the world. When the mind looks inwards, it falters at the threshold, even I AM cannot cross, it falls away. The *sphurana* in the Heart is the expression of this 'I AM' awareness sitting on the threshold.

* *kArakas* – doers, the roles pertaining to action, creators of relation i.e. donor and recipient etc.

>I want to thank you for the trouble you've gone to, to help me come to an understanding of the Vichara. I have read quite a few books on Ramana and

his teachings and they have been of immense value in my search for the truth, however I need the guidance of an adept to advise me on whether I am doing the Vichara correctly. From what I've read of your letters, I get the impression you are someone who has firsthand experience of what you are saying. So I'll be grateful if you could tell whether I am doing the Vichara correctly. What I do is, try to fix my attention on that which is watching. When I am swept by a tide of thoughts I put the query "to whom are these thoughts" and so forth. I ignore the feeble thoughts and try to watch the watcher. Is this the correct method? Or should one cut off every thought with the query method? Which is the better method or can one use both methods depending on the prevailing mood. Incidentally in your letter you said one should attend to that which is watching as it is the ego-self and needs all the attention one can give it.<

The very purpose of Self Enquiry is to focus the entire mind at its own source. Whenever one is distracted by thought (feeble or otherwise), we ask, "To whom does this thought appear?" The answer "To me" is then resolved with the question "Who am I?" This is not a question for the intellect. There is no answer. Any answer the intellect might give returns one to the question "To whom does this thought appear?" The questioner himself is the answer. This is attention on the source. It is not therefore a case of one 'I' searching for another 'I'. Nor one 'I' watching another 'I'. The 'I' who searches is the 'I' searched for and both are the primal 'I'-thought. This 'I'-thought in turn dissolves, like the proverbial salt doll in the ocean, when it is held tight, through the process of Self Enquiry. In the Self there is no mind and no 'I'-thought, let alone any other thoughts.

Atma Vichara drives us home to the goal, where this primal 'I' is subsumed by the *Atman*, shining 'as It is', devoid of *upAdhis* [limiting adjuncts]. All suffering is reliant on the ignorance of the one fundamental fact that "in Reality, there are not two selves, there is only Self-abidance." "The thought 'I', 'mine' erroneously imposed on the body and senses, which are not the real Self, must be removed by the wise, by abiding as the real Self." (Vivekacudamani)

Misunderstanding this, all is misunderstood. Then self and other emanate relentlessly from our own consciousness. So, to reiterate, the questioning subverts the intellect and returns one, one-pointedly, to the Heart – i.e. Self-

abidance. Here, the answer comes without words, like an irresistible pull, a quickening. This is an answer that, self-evidently, leaves no question begging (i.e. the question "To whom does this thought occur?" cannot be raised). This pull from the Heart is not under the control of the mind; all the mind can do is keep itself emptied except for the thought "Who am I?" and where necessary, "to whom do these thoughts arise?" in order that it remains open to the pull.

The Self needs no enquiry. All that is required is an emptying of the cloud-like thought processes which begin with the 'I'-thought. The senses can only perceive by the light they receive from the Self which abides in the Heart. The great *tapas* (austerity), which might at one time be seen as a penance sustained by great effort, is in reality the effortless return to the eternal fire of the *Atman* in the Heart.

The 'I'-thought brings all sorts in its train: selfhood, God, AUM, world, good, bad, birth, death, etc., every judgement that can be conceived of. Creation in all its glory. This simple process of Self Enquiry as described above, if applied with regular sustained, intensity, throughout the waking day, reverses the outward train of thought and concentrates attention on the creator of thought and the realisation that 'I' itself is the primal thought – *ahamkara* – without attributes. Standing at this threshold is self-abidance. It matters little that throughout the day the 'I' must become involved in thought processes as long as the mind is trained to return to the enquiry at the earliest moment available.

Remember any answer or experience that the mind can claim for its own such as "I am watching", or "I feel bliss" leaves the question begging. The purpose of enquiry is to suspend thought in order that 'I'-ness or Being alone is present. This is all one can do. At this point the 'I' will, in due course, sink into the Self. 'I am' is the beginning and the end of *samsara*. Even 'I am' is not the final answer.

7/2/2004

>What I do is, try to fix my attention on that which is watching. When I am swept by a tide of thoughts, I put the query "to whom are these thoughts" and so forth. I ignore the feeble thoughts and try to watch the watcher. Is this the correct method? Or should one cut off every thought with the query

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Remember, any answer or experience that the mind can claim for its own, such as "I am watching" or "I feel bliss," leaves the question begging. The purpose of enquiry is to suspend thought in order that 'I'-ness or Being alone is present. This is all one can do. At this point the 'I' will, in due course, sink into the Self. 'I am' is the beginning and the end of *samsara*. Even 'I am' is not the final answer.

7/2/2004: Anguish

>My problem still is that when this is done for some time an incredible anguish arises and pushes me out again. Then Vichara is stopped – until the next pull comes to take up practice again. Atma Vichara can't be forgotten as it is the very essence of the teaching of Bhagavan, who is very near to my heart. Also – strange enough – it is felt that bhakti demands Vichara. Without Vichara no real bhakti here. So I try again and again – sometimes all the attempts seem to have no point at all.<

The feeling of anguish is not unusual when one practices enquiry. In fact, it is inevitable. Self Enquiry draws out the latent tendencies in order that they can be summarily dealt with and this anguish is the ego's primary fear. Self-preservation is a powerful *vasana* which ego tends to misconstrue when faced with it in *Vichara*. It panics. Ideally, when one comes across this it should be cut immediately with the question "To whom does this anguish appear?" This is the process of enquiry. This is easier said than done. The

greatest stumbling block in enquiry is facing and overcoming this fear of death. Remember Bhagavan's experience. But if one can get through it....

However... Anguish is also a powerful and positive symptom of *bhakti*. The idea that 'I' might forget the presence of my Lord (or the quest for Self) for even a minute causes great anguish. But remember, with forgetfulness of the Self comes the bliss of remembrance. If one can create an association of devotion with anguish, then the fear is transformed into a longing. Whenever there is anguish, one remembers, and in that remembrance, it is helpful to take to *japa* of your mantra for a while. Whenever there is anguish, take to *japa*. Then, when ready, the feeling of great anguish provides the ideal vehicle for *Atma Vichara* to cut in. When *Atma Vichara* cuts in then true dedication begins. This is *bhakti*.

24/2/2004: Refraining from action

>I find a lot of people in this group saying that one should refrain from doing anything to free ourselves from the bondage of the self. One should be in a state of being and so on. I agree that all the misery in the world is a result of people trying to do this and that. However as long as the ego is there, man will continue to act. He cannot refrain from action. I think Ramana was very clear about this; he said we need to make an effort. Papaji who has attained realisation says one should simply give up the notion of being in bondage. I think that is easier said than done. It is true that the maker of effort is the problem but he/she cannot be wished away.

The Atma Vichara is an investigation into the 'I' or the maker of effort. I think if one goes about it in the prescribed way at some point one will get an insight into the nature of the ego and it will just drop away. When one stops identifying oneself with the limited self or the image, we carry of ourselves then there is total freedom from fear or sorrow or whatever. Otherwise, a visit to a good hypnotist is all we need to do to be rid of the 'I' notion.

So let us not fool ourselves into believing realising the self can be so easy. One can of course sit quietly for a while without making any effort to do anything. It may work for a while but then the mind will get absorbed in 'doing'. Your boss rings you and tells you, you have a report to write up for the next day's meeting and your mind will start to run around in circles.<

This idea is primarily *tAmasika* and is, indeed, rife amongst the neo-advaitists. If it has been mentioned on this site it has also been countered elsewhere by the assertion that intense effort is needed by one who would 'break the bonds'.

There are three categories of teacher, who correspondingly teach under the sway of the three gunas [tendencies of the mind] – *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* [purity, passion and lethargy]. Where *sAttvika* principles are uppermost, the teaching of intense Self Enquiry predominates, along with *bhakti* leading to Self Enquiry. Where *rAjasika* tendencies are uppermost, the various yogas, hatha, raja, tantra, ritual worship etc. are taught. Where *tAmasic* tendencies are uppermost, lethargy leading to nihilism holds sway. Unfortunately, the simple injunction '*hrdi nama*' – 'be still in the Heart' has been taken, by some, to mean that one should/can do nothing. This, then, changes what is clearly a *sAttvika* injunction into a *tAmasika* one. By means of *sAttvika* the other two are overcome. Of the three, the *tAmasika* tendencies are to be avoided. Remember the injunction 'Be still!' is an impetus to act.

Intense *Vichara* is essential. One must enquire into this individual as long as the sense of 'doing' is there. This leads to enquiry into the ego's aspect of seeking no less than the everyday aspects of judging, being still, etc. The task is one of growing attentiveness to the quest. This attentiveness is dependent on the intensity of enquiry.

In the midst of work *Vichara* should become intense. Indeed, work and the trials of working life are excellent fuel for *Vichara*.

4/3/2004

>I am not really interested in theory but on how to do Self-Inquiry with this experience present. Could I get some guidance on "Watch wherefrom this sphurana (throbbing) arises and wait attentively"?<

Make every effort to fix the mind on the *sphurana*. Let there be no resistance to the experience. In fact, if *sphurana* is felt, the fascination is automatic. The pull is irresistible. Let it become all-consuming. Wait without expectation. If the mind stirs, even slightly, enquiry 'who am I?' If *sphurana* is 'felt' continuously, without effort, there is no more to ask!

27/3/2004

>Coincidently part of yesterday's Chat Room[1] was spent on asking on what were the fundamental flaws in Neo Advaita. I felt that they [the Neo-Advaitins] do not admit there is any obscuration of the Self and therefore do not advocate Sadhana. Also they do not seem to make any distinction between Reflected and Absolute Consciousness. The West is flooded with Neo Advaita, currently, many teachers claiming awakening has happened, so times don't change. I expect there are many other differences as well. Ramana tells us 'Why all these arguments?<

Indeed.

If there are any flaws in Neo *Vedanta*, they are of little real concern to any but the philosophers, academics and others with a vested self-interest. That one fundamental flaw, having reared its head, sets all others in motion. As long as one does not look closely at this fundamental flaw, it gives so much trouble; yet, when one looks closely for it, it is found not to exist. All these 'things' are inseparable from this primary 'flaw' - *ahamkara* ('I'-maker).

If one is pulled towards Ramana and his Self-enquiry, worrying about teachers who say otherwise becomes counter-productive to this *sadhana*. That which is at one time faith will become knowledge.* To simply apply oneself to the steady search for Self is all that is required. It is ego and ego alone which is pulled hither and thither. Like a hammer searching around frantically for spurious nails, which it believes it has a natural (innate) ability to bang in, it begs the question!

The obscuration or veiling (*avarana*) of the Self is a characteristic of ignorance and not of the Self, which remains Self-evident at all times. So why should one not make an attempt to brush the veil aside? Where's the harm? If it is the case that I know I exist, yet do not really know who I am, then looking for a little extra light to shine on the problem seems sensible. Although the veiling might not obscure completely, pulling aside a closed curtain in the middle of the day is a very revealing experience.

* The faith of every man is in accordance with his innate disposition (whether *sattva*; *rajas*; or *tamas* etc.). “O *Bharata*. Man is made of faith, as

[1] At this time there was each Friday a talk in the chatroom of the group.

his faith is, so he is. The man of faith, occupied with That only, with senses under control, obtains Knowledge (*jnana*). Having obtained knowledge he very soon discovers Peace Supreme. To those, who are constantly engaged in worshipping Me with devotion, I give the Yoga of intellect (i.e. Enquiry), by which they come to Me. Out of compassion for them, abiding in their Self, I destroy their nescience born of ignorance, with the resplendent Lamp of Knowledge. For those whose ignorance is destroyed by Knowledge of the Self, Knowledge, like the sun, reveals the Supreme in them." (Verses 17-21 of Bhagavan's Selection from Bhagavad Gita)

Self-enquiry has never been something alien. It is the natural predilection.

30/3/2004

>*Ramana and others were often asked about this [the life as a householder] and gave the advice that the life of the householder should not be changed yet they themselves did not live this life.*<

It should be remembered that Sri Ramana left his home only after 'Realisation' not in order to attain realisation. He realised, albeit at a young age, in the midst of home and family. Of course, later an even larger family moved in and around him.

19/4/2004

>*One of the meanings of Sannyasa is to be established (nyasta) in Sat (that is Jnana).*<

Thank you. Indeed.

sat + ni + Asa = pure abidance or abidance in the Self.

To many a one, *sannyasa*, instead of warding of hindrances, it will become a means to gather more hindrances when importance is given to attire, appearance and expecting to be treated in a certain way on taking to *sannyas*.

To an Andhra seeker, Sri Bhagavan said: "*Sannyasa* is mentioned for one who is fit. It consists in renunciation not of material objects but of attachment to them. *Sannyasa* can be practised by any one even at home. Only one must be fit for it." (Talk 588)

Talk 427

D.: “Is it necessary to take *sannyasa* for Self-Realisation?”

M.: “*Sannyasa* is to renounce one's individuality. This is not the same as tonsure and ochre robes. A man may be a *grihi [householder]*; yet, if he does not think he is a *grihi*, he is a *sanyasi*. On the contrary a man may wear ochre robes and wander about; yet if he thinks he is a *sannyasi* he is not that. To think of *sannyasa* defeats its own purpose.”

22/4/2004

>One reason for my joining the Atma Vichara Group was because the visaara (Tamil for vichara) seemed so tough and i wanted some help and feedback.<

This, i.e. 'seeming toughness', is the biggest stumbling block to vichara. Help is always forthcoming. However the consequence of seeking help, and the subsequent feedback, **if accompanied by the temptation to compare experience,** simply compounds the problem. Oh dear! what to do? Practice!! Practice!! Practice!!

28/4/2004

>It is difficult to say something about Gurus. Nannagaru was the first one I met in my life who said he is a Guru. Nannagaru was kind and silent. He was very nice, for sure. Yet I found it strange that someone comes in such a role for a meeting of devotees.<

As I understand it, Guru points from within and pulls from within. When one happens upon a Sage who is no longer pulled or pushed, then his pointing may well be the push from without, and a catalyst for understanding the pull from within. Bhagavan recommended that we should visit such Sages that “produce peace of mind in his presence” and “by the sense of respect you feel for him”. Sometimes a word, or look, or movement suffices for some visitors. For others a more prolonged contact may be needed. The Guru or Sage merely facilitates the removal of ignorance, nothing more.

Regarding devotees of Bhagavan, it is true that there is no need to look elsewhere. He has explained that neither you, nor Guru is the body. However,

some have experienced that although Bhagavan has been accepted as *sadguru*, there was still a little 'personal' nudge of confirmation needed. If we look at the various interpretations of Bhagavan's teaching we can get an idea of the possible deviations that might be taken along the way. One who has already travelled the Path, may be useful in such circumstances.

30/4/2004: *Vichara* as the "default state"

>*Default may be used in computer-language: default of settings. As one makes a setting on one's computer, which works always in the background as soon as the computer is switched on so the mind shall practice vichara?*<

Indeed. And when mind wanders it returns to *vichara* as soon as it 'remembers'.

18/5/2004

>*Surely – it must also be the case that intense atma vichara brings some nerval strain – likewise bhakti. Is it so?*<

It is the case that the mind tends to make causal links between things (A+B=C etc.) This is mindstuff. People look at the *Jnani* and see him in pain or his head shaking (Bhagavan). In order to explain this, they perhaps refer to the story of the elephant destroying the small hut it lives in. The *Jnani* himself may at times and to certain people give a similar narrative. This is all mindstuff. Whether it happens or not is not the point. Enquiring into the one who wonders is the point. If we spend so much time creating links to explain things, we are not doing Enquiry.

>*It seems vasanas come to more power and coming out.*<

Enquire into the experiencer is the ultimate cure. When the 'I' thought rises, everything rises with it. Then all the causal connections. If we know ourselves (not the self we think we are) and remain still as we are, there is nothing else. Let the body have its troubles – what have they got to do with anything?

"There is no point worrying about the outer events of your life because you can exercise no control over these destined activities. Your responsibility in

this life is to see who you are, not to rewrite your life script." (Annamalai Swami, Final Talks, p. 36)

When the body reacts, does that mean that we must become involved in the reaction? This is attachment. *Vasanas* are of two types, so we have been told by Bhagavan: *bandha hetuh* which causes bondage for the ignorant, and *bhoga hetuh* which gives only enjoyment to the wise. For the *Jnani*, having transcended the ego, all causes of bondage are inoperative. All that remains is the remnant of *prarabdha* in the form of *bhoga vasana* only; hence, he appears to be tied to the body. Any interpretation of this is in the mind of the *ajnani* only. An aspirant is instructed to find out who s/he is. If s/he does so, all these matters will be forgotten. As long as there is one who experiences – that one must be enquired into. That is the cure.

Either enquire or surrender… there is nothing else to do. But remember, surrender must be complete.

27/5/2004

>*I sat down in front of Bhagavan's photo […] not being able to do anything, not even Ramana-japa. Then I became aware that indeed this is the simplest truth – that not even a single thought is possible without the source … but I am aware nevertheless – also without thought. […] So the "unability" is mere grace – otherwise, would I ever catch it?*<

Indeed. You always have it!!

Trust in Him. All thoughts begin and end in Bhagavan. Understand this, know this, and you cannot but take a dip in the river which flows both ways. Fortunately there is no fear of drowning. Then… when you catch the flow one way words will flow, when you catch the flow the other way no words can dare intrude. Ego just bobs about in the middle, submitting to His will. Don't worry!

14/6/2004

[The questioner is suffering sleep problems.]

>*When there is no sleep at night, I shall do japa.*<

That's a good idea. When you do *japa* until you go to sleep, sleep is very peaceful and if one should awake during the night the *japa* will start up immediately.

>About breath – you wrote that it is not needed to combine the mantra with breath when repeated mentally. Yes, though it is very nice to combine both.<

Indeed. When *japa* continues unabated breath is found to regulate itself naturally.

>I have not yet found out which mantra should be repeated permanently, as I feel attracted to the Christian prayer likewise than to the Ramana-mantra.<

Mantra reveals the effortless *japa* which goes on incessantly within oneself. Oral *japa* becomes mental, mental *japa* reveals the eternal *sphurana*. Finally *japa* reveals itself as your very Self. The name Christus or Ramana or both is fine. However, do you fear leaving one out that both must be repeated? If so that is mindstuff. Either one, or both, is fine… but absolute faith must be present too. With faith replaced by indecision, one might as well repeat the words 'London bus' over and over again.

One could simply recite '*aham*, *aham*…' Now that cuts through the problem of 'personality' – i.e. Ramana or Christ. It is an interesting mantra – '*aham'*. As one repeats it quickly, sometimes it reverberates as 'mmmaha' 'mmmaha'. *Maha* (from the root 'mah') means 'gladden, honour, rejoice, arouse', and also 'great, abundant' etc. Always it comes back to '*aham'* – 'I'. When repeating '*aham'* the nasal end is allowed to resonate (uhummmmm). Ideally mentally but it is wonderful chanted too. *Aham* also encompasses the entire Sanskrit alphabet from 'a' to 'ha' and utilises the entire vocalic space. In this respect it is non-different from 'om', another wonderful mantra.

Whatever is chosen, there must be unflinching faith in the mantra. Sri Ramakrishna used to find various names would well up from within at different times and he would be carried off by them. But He realised that no single holy name was better than any other. So His rapture was unbiased. Yet still He had one name that welled up most often.

28/6/2004

>Could you enlighten me on what are the "threefold desires" mentioned in verse 80 of The Garland. Thank you very much.

From "The Garland of Guru's Sayings":

80) "Only the supreme shade of the tree of the Awakened Consciousness of the transcendental Being can mitigate totally the fierce heat of the sorrow of threefold desires, courted by the beings swirling and whirling along the sweltering heat of the desert of this world-form of desire."<

These are said to be three groups of *vasanas* or pre-dispositions.

1) *aparadha* – fault

Brought about by self-pride and diffidence in the teaching of the Guru, there is misunderstanding, such as 'there is no reality transcending the world; even if there were, it cannot be known; if one claims to know it, it is an illusion of the mind; for how can knowledge make a person free from misery or help his emancipation?'

Placing one's faith in the Guru and the *Sastras* is said to be the solution.

2) *karma* – action

for the victim of past actions, the mind becomes bogged down with predis-positions; subtle truths become lost.

Grace is the solution.

3) *kama* – desire

Said to be the most common group, this refers to victims of desire always obsessed with the desire to work for this or that end. This sets in motion desires too numerous to count, like waves in the ocean.

This must gradually be dealt with by dispassion, discrimination, worship, study, learning from the wise, investigation into Self.

(cf. Tripura Rahasya, chapter 19)

13/7/2004

>Q: "When can one practice Sahaj Samadhi?"

Ramana: "Even from the beginning. Even though one practises Kevala Nirvikalpa Samadhi for years together, if one has not rooted out the vasanas one will not attain liberation." [Swarnagiri: Crumbs from His Table]

Could anybody say how this practice is done? I appreciate more details.<

By means of a conscious quest for the 'I'-thought, the first (and last) of all thoughts, the human condition is resolved and *sahaja samadhi* revealed. The habit-forming daily game of *namarupa* (name and form or mindstuff), which starts upon waking and ends with sleep, is the only obstruction. If Self-enquiry can become the default state of mind throughout daily activity, the 'game' is truly resolved. Then, it is as if, the *'namarupa'* game, mind, which is simply a recognizing and naming mechanism, comes out only when there is a need for it. The Sage eats, sleeps, and remembers past events. All transformation is *namadheyam* (in name only). As all things made of gold have an essence of gold irrespective of the outer shape, so the Sage abides in and as the Self irrespective of outward appearances.

"Those who are in the *sahaja nirvikalpa* state are like a light in a windless place, or the ocean without waves; that is there is no movement. They cannot find anything which is different from themselves." (from Nagamma: Letters, 30th October 1947)

This is the ever-present natural state; one does go into and come out of it. Whether the eyes of such a man are open or closed, there is no fluctuation.

"Others notice the *jnani* active... He is not himself aware of his activities. They pertain to his body and not to his real Self, *swarupa.*" (from Talk 82)

namarupa – the state of self and other; subject and object

swarupa – the Self; own essence

18/7/2004: Aham-graduation

> taken from the following web page
http://www.aham.com/enlightenment/index.html[1]

"As far as we know, AHAM is the only organization or group anywhere in the world providing formal instruction in this powerful but simple process

[1] This webpage is no more in use.

brought to the world by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, where, following your training, you receive personal formal guidance from a qualified Buddy who is an advanced graduate."

Are there any graduates here? I just heard that Sri V. Ganesan is recommending this. Can anyone confirm?<

Self Enquiry is indeed very simple. There is no need for unnecessary contrivance around the practice. It is freely available to one and all and has no copyright.

As you no doubt know, there is the very helpful Ramana Ashram in South India which abounds with information in the form of books, video tapes and, of course, 'The Mountain Path' magazine. This one institution is almost one too many. Why would one then build another institution? And in particular, why a hierarchical institution involving graduation and advanced graduation? What would motivate such a thing? Who knows? It is reminiscent of the various 'life-management' type thingies which compete for 'punters' in a self-created marketplace. Surely this style of 'enquiry' can only bolster up the ego, as it waits and longs for the day it too can become a 'Buddy' and help those less well off than themselves.

Regarding Ganesan's 'recommendation', I am reminded of a very useful reply I received from him in the early 80s in response to a question about Bhagavan's possible reaction to western Indian-style spiritual organisations and their diverse views, in which he said, "... they only prove that the hunger of mankind for spiritual values can digest anything up to pebbles! You want to know what Bhagavan's views have been. He never started any such movement, nor did he interfere in it."

30/7/2004

>Dear friends, yesterday when I went for a walk in the evening I was thinking about Karma or action. Can any action ever culminate in truth? Can any thinking process ever culminate in truth? Can action ever reach that which has never acted? Can the changing ever reach the unchanging? Can thought ever reach the no thought? Does not action result in more action? In that way isn't who am I? also a thinking process? a process in karma? Can truth ever be a process of cause and effect? Isn't it better to wait for

truth to reveal itself? All these are thoughts which went through my mind. Those of U who are more knowledgeable and experienced kindly post your ideas on these questions, if u have the time.<

ISvarArpitam necchayAkrtam /
cittaSodhakam muktisAdhakam //

Action without desire, dedicated to the Lord, purifies the mind and brings about Liberation.

So says Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in Upadesa Saram, v. 3.

And in v. 10 of the same text:

hrtsthalemanah svasthatAkriyA /
bhaktiyogabodhAScaniScitam //

The act (*kriya*) of abiding in one's natural state, the mind set in the Heart, is without doubt, Devotion, Yoga, and Knowledge.

In truth, this is the pre-eminent act.

M.: "Merging the mind into the Heart certainly comprises meritorious duty (*karma*), devotion (*bhakti*), yoga and supreme wisdom (*jnana*). **That is the whole truth in a nut-shell.**"

D.: "That does not satisfy my search for happiness. I am unable to keep my mind steady."

The Master quoted again from the same book: "Continuous search for what the mind is results in its disappearance. That is the straight path." [v. 17]

D.: "How to search for the mind then?"

M.: "The mind is only a bundle of thoughts. The thoughts have their root in the 'I'-thought. He quoted: 'Whoever investigates the origin of the 'I'-thought for him the ego perishes. This is the true investigation.' **The true 'I' is then found shining by itself."** (from Talk 222)

11/8/2004

[The questioner is regretting something she has done.] >*I have made a big mistake, but I am willing to make it ok again.*<

Who is this 'I' that can make things OK again? Is this the 'I' that 'brought about the situation' and creates other 'situations', then decides it doesn't like its creation? If so, how can this 'I' make anything OK? This 'I' is merely a tool, which, when out of control, makes a mess of all the things it tries to work.<

>*Please help if you can.*<

The best help is *vichara*. Why not leave things for a while? Let them settle.

>*You will have to be patient with me. I am going at the moment through strange confusing states of mind as some strange power has been awakened. This goes now since 2 years and it started with practice of self-enquiry. This was anger today. It is ego.*<

It is indeed ego. There is no strange power which has been awoken, only ego attempting to hold onto its control of everything. It is ego, for example, who declares that Enquiry is hard. Enquiry is not hard. It is ego that decides Enquiry is not suitable for 'me'. Yet it is the most natural thing. In order to get rid of these doubts one must see directly. When one sees directly without agitated mind, one's true nature shines through. One cannot pray to Bhagavan in order that one's wishes be fulfilled (i.e. in order that 'my' plans be fulfilled). If one truly enters the path of *vichara* there can be no such confusion. There must be patience in practice initially. Then it goes on all the time. It is the most natural thing.

The only worthwhile advice is… do Self enquiry! To whom do these problems arise? What else is there?!? Without Enquiry as substrate, all kinds of confusion continues to arise. If ego goes unchecked all sorts of nonsense gets taken for reality. **Just stop!**

It is the expectation and anticipation that is problematic. One must take things as they come.

16/8/2004

[There was some discussion about various translation projects relating to Ramana Maharshi.]

Without due care all this becomes pointless occupation for the mind. It is like during Bhagavan's lifetime. People came to the Ashram and then soon

got caught up in politics, or work in the kitchen, or personal service… but few took His advice. Then they complained about lack of progress in their *sadhana*. What a carry on! This is food for the mind. Everyone wants to have a Ramana identity like those on the *jnani* circus using His name but ignoring His *upadesa* (Teaching). There are those close to an Ashram too who thrive on having such an association. It brings fame and importance. This is just mindstuff. If one has not fully resolved to find the real Self right now… one is simply pandering to this mindstuff. The resolve must come first.

>*Must you always be so directly pointing things out. Miles? Can't you say it more gently?*<

Why listen to anything I say! Very few people do. Which is why I say that all I do all day is open my mouth and let my belly rumble. As for directness in speech… it's the quickest way to get a message across, isn't it? But who really listens.

1/10/2004

>*I still have difficulties with breath when doing japa.*<

There is no need to have difficulty with breath. *Japa* can go on internally without any 'physical' link to breath at all. Even if the *japa* is external why need it be any different than talking? Is there difficulty with breath when one talks normally? Let *japa* be the same. There tends to be too much thought put into this. Let *japa* continue naturally without over-analysis.

19/10/2004

>*Ganapati Muni seemed to have believed on a gradual process and on experiences.*<

In 1954, K. Lakshmana Sarma wrote that "From the very beginning there were two schools of belief among the devotees of Bhagavan. One school consisted of the famous Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni and his disciples. These were adherents of the *Sakta cult*, which has tenets of its own, different from the *Advaitic* teaching of Bhagavan. The other school consisted of staunch believers in the pure *Advaita* metaphysics as expounded by Bhagavan Sri *Sankara*."

Bhagavans teaching was, in reality, above and beyond, yet did not exclude either view. The two schools are broadly represented by Lakshmana Sarma's 'Maha Yoga' and Ganapati Muni's 'Sat Darshana'.

>I don't understand all what he [Ganapati Muni] is saying and experiencing.<

Every experience only confirms the experiencer. Instead of looking for experience we should look for the experiencer. Remember Bhagavan's comment when asked whether Ganapati Muni had attained Realisation during his life. "How could he? His *sankalpas* (inherent tendencies) were too strong." Bhagavan was referring to Ganapati Muni's ambitions to revitalise the country and religion. However Ganapati Muni was a great devotee of Bhagavan and is important to the unfolding of the Ramana episode.

26/10/2004 [About neo-advaita and the clichés it uses]

The *advaita* word game is merely an intellectual pursuit, but a compulsive one. Any *Advaitin* worth his salt however knows, with absolute conviction, that the same Being is called *Brahman*, *Atman* and *Bhagavan*. He also knows that it is only when the conditioned mind (the seat of doctrine, whether *advaita* or *dvaita* or any other *vada*, for that matter) vanishes that there is indeed absolute Experience and Knowledge. However if there is only a glimpse of Truth, which has not become steady in *nididhyasana*, the mind, once again distracted by old *vasanas*, will present wrong notions, inappropriately, as truths. Such verbal jousting surely appeared during Bhagavan's lifetime too.

"When the real, effortless, permanent, happy nature is realised it will be found to be not inconsistent with the ordinary activities of life." (from Talk 597)

The Sage will quite happily utilise an attenuated ego, with feigned differentiation, and talk in plain terms without the need to score points against perceived opponents. If this was not the case there could be no joy which is Ramana. This is where the *advaita* word gamer fails. His shaky pseudo-*advaita* stance must be bolstered up with an unnecessary show of knowledge.

30/10/2004: Bhagavad Gita, 2.69

An apposite translation:

“During that, which is the night* of all beings, one who is self-controlled is [ever] awake. And that which is the waking state for other beings is [but] a dream* for the introspective sage.”

*The word 'niSA' (in the text) can mean night and/or dream.

An apposite quote from Bhagavan:

“The dream is the combination of *jagrat* and *sushupti*. It is due to the *samskaras* of the *jagrat* state. Hence we remember dreams at present. *Samskaras* are no formed contrarywise; therefore also we are not aware of the dream and *jagrat* simultaneously. Still everyone will recollect strange perplexities in dream. One wonders if he dreams or is awake. He argues and determines that he is only awake. When really awake, he finds that it was all only a dream.” (from Talk 399)

And another:

M.: “Why are you not perfect? Did you feel imperfection in your sleep? Why do you not remain so even now? Bring sleep into the waking state *(jagrat sushupti*) and you will be alright. Ya nisa sarva bhootanam... pasyato muneh... (That which is night for the ignorant is day for the wise.)”

D.: “Yes, if he is a *muni* (*sage*).”

M.: “Who is a *muni*? Is he not a man?” (from Talk 290)

30/10/2004

>*The vibration felt in the body seems to be seen as “incongruous” by some.*<

Indeed. There are those who say that there is no such ‘physical’ experience. They are still tied to duality. […]

There are those who say that the ‘I’-‘I’ cannot manifest as a pulse. That’s fine too. Interestingly, some of those are the very ones who one would expect to ‘hud thus wheesht’ (i.e. shut up and leave the polemic alone). They tend to write a lot about Ramana’s teachings.

>As seen in V. 21 [of Upadesa Saram] 'I' is taken mostly for the ego – aham – and 'I-I' as expression of Atman. Perhaps Bhagavan speaks such like to show the difference? As the eternal I expresses itself through the permanent throbbing 'I-I-I-I'?<

Indeed. However as previously mentioned above, this is not the case… is it? Well according to Bhagavan 'Yes!' See Talk 403.[1] It is the experience here. It is also experienced by many on a daily basis as an unexpected 'flutter' in the chest area. The 'beat' of the Self is the eternal herald. This is the meaning of Nataraja's Drum 'Damaru'. The drum is non-different from Him. It beats and attracts the devotees towards Him, as 'I'-'I'. 'I'-'I' is Om itself, the origin of all sounds. This heralds the formless Absolute. Then… sequence-less Being is found abiding in Silence.

1/11/2004

>Let us assume there are two types of languages. The first type of language is used "internally" for thoughts, words. Since everything is "internal" let us assume that a thought is nothing but a word.<

However, there is no need to assume anything. This is the very problem.

Brahman, which is without a beginning and an end, and celebrated as neither more, nor less, than One, is the essence of language. It remains with neither sequence nor form. The threefold (or fourfold, etc. – depending on commentator) divisions are mere impositions. Although undifferentiated it appears as differentiated, merely through its own denotative potential, while all the time the One, the seed of all, to whom, paradoxically, this multiplicity appears to belong, remains as the enjoyer, that which is enjoyed and, indeed, the enjoyment. Traditionally, the three divisions described [by Bhartrhari and other Grammarians], are, *vaikharI* (gross speech – spoken and unspoken), *madhyamA* (pre-sequential but formative) and *paSyanti* (essential/si-

[1] Talk 403: "Sri Bhagavan said: 'In the incident mentioned in the book Self-Realization that I became unconscious and symptoms of death supervened, I was all along aware. I could feel the action of the physical heart stopped and equally the action of the Heart-centre unimpaired. This state lasted about a quarter of an hour.' We asked if it was true that some disciples have had the privilege of feeling Sri Bhagavan's Heart to be on the right by placing their hands on Sri Bhagavan's chest. Sri Bhagavan said, 'Yes.'"

lent). These can be resolved by means of *Atma Vichara*. *PaSyanti* has been used as a synonym for Self or *Atman*. But *paSyanti* is far from being a black hole. The root of the word is 'paS' – 'see clearly, look on, experience, shining etc.'. The manifestation of speech is quite simply the manifestation of *Sakti* (and its various divisions such as *prana*, *cit* etc.). *Sakti*, as language, carries the borrowed denotative potential. This borrowed light of *paSyantI* is assumed to divide (like light through a prism). This ego-prism must abandon its assumption of separation from the Self and, retracing its steps, merge in its source. Retracing its steps the ego does not find a black-hole, but rather that which was obstructing true vision quite simply falls away. Black-hole seems to be analogous to the Sanskrit terms *'SUnya'* or *'laya'*, both of which have been used to describe the pitfall of 'blankness'.

>The Hindus discovered this limitation of verbal-languages five-thousand years ago. They could not use their verbal-language to tell us what their unified-field of "verbal-black-hole" was. The best they could do is use their verbal-language and point to this "verbal-black-hole" which they called Atman.<

Not sure what you mean by 'Hindus' here. The term Hindu seems to refer to such a wide range of philosophical systems. In fact, the Grammarians were so sure that Language, or its Science, was a *darsaNa* that they were bold enough to say that the science of the Grammar, and the word, was the 'dvAram apavargasya...' (Doorway to Liberation). In *SabdapUrvayoga* (the esoteric science of *vyAkaraNa*) one learns to stand at the Door at all times.

2/11/2004

>To simply think that anyone can get liberated by doing 'Self-Inquiry' from one fine day with or without an intellectual understanding but WITHOUT changing their basic traits [...] are SIMPLY WASTING THEIR (and possibly others') TIME.<

Thank you, but here is another possibility:

When ego rises all else rises. It is very, very fortunate to take to *vichara* from the very beginning. All else comes from this. If one truly takes to *vichara* and seeks the ego and its point of arising, all 'base values' come

good. We should not belittle the power of *atma vichara*. To do so is all too common in today's world.

21/11/2004: Charge at the door

Dear Friends (a "light"-hearted response to those who increasingly write, with concern, about the cost of learning the Truth),

There is no charge at the door. If you arrive and find one imposed, you must have gone to the wrong place. Or have a mistaken notion of what is required of the door-keeper. The door in question – ? –

tad dvaram apavargasya ... it is the door to Liberation (Bhartrhari)... **the birth-, and death-right of every living being.**

In fact, the very idea of charge is an anathema. Why...!?!

It is entered daily back and forth with no imposition of charge… unless one considers the deposit and subsequent reclamation of egoism,... at the threshold,... a charge... like baggage relinquished and subsequently reclaimed, with neither concern nor remorse. Hmmm! Perhaps there is some confusion. You while away an hour or two at the ballet, or at a heavy metal concert, or at the cinema... this is considered entertainment, mindstuff, fun, for this you pay without complaint (well! usually there is no complaint). Why then complain when asked for £25 or £35 or £45 entrance fee at the door of the advertising jnani's venue. Surely, you knew in advance the occupation of the speaker and the name of his game, as he tours from town to town touting his wares, the poster in the local health food shop showing the detail. If you are 'lucky' you might see the classic 'raised pen' (or some variation on the theme)... you might even be the one who responds "It's light" to the acclamation of some of those present. To see the clowns in the circus we pay a fee, so it is with fortune-tellers and mind-jugglers. That's entertainment. This disapprobation is self-revealing. The cognition is clear ...follow it ... it's time to chuck the hobby (which is, after all, mere procrastination) and remain fulfilled.

Have you actually read Bhagavan's teaching?

23/11/2004

[There was some talks about organising Ramana-*satsangs* and how to do it.]

As time goes by Ramana might seem to be usurped by those who feel that they know more than He. It is the way of the world. They use his name for their own gain. It is quite paradoxical. The Truth is that Bhagavan Ramana never goes away… that which is Bhagavan is here and now for those who care to look and see.

If this is something that people may pay for like a weekend retreat… then I would not recommend. In fact I would stay clear of such a thing. This is the state of things all over. This is ego. This is the beginning of institutionalisation which is the top of the slippery slope of corruption. It is much better to start simple and remain simple… just a few friends in Bhagavan meeting at each others houses. No charge. If people wish to contribute food, refreshments… then good. When/if things become larger then perhaps a small venue might be used with the participants continuing to provide, on a voluntary basis, food etc. and all that is necessary, including cost of hall hire or room hire. New visitors should never be charged! Once one goes along the fancy venue thing, all is ruined. This is the state of Ramana in the UK. Pretenders looking for a throne. YUKK!!! But what do I know about those things? Just ignore the above! I was too stupid to take up the offer of paid work touring about talking about Ramana and his Sanskrit verses etc.

1/12/2004

>What is Ramana's advice to the patients who are terminally ill and those who will not be able to survive for more than few months? Ramana answers similar questions by asking the questioner to find out 'Who am I' ?<

This is surely sage advice. This advice should be taken.

>The seeker who is terminally ill, I believe does not seem to have enough time to find his real source following this method<.

The 'I' that believes such things is the very 'I' that is to be enquired into.

Enquiry takes no time. Whoever entertains the thought that it takes a long time or a short time is surely a fool to themselves. At the point of death, the ego kicks furiously and asserts its presence. But to one who has taken to

enquiry the reflex is to enquire, immediately, into this upstart. We are told in Bhagavad Gita and elsewhere that the thought at time of death is all important. Through practice of Self-enquiry, during life, the final thoughts at time of death are automatically expunged. Of this, there is absolutely no doubt!

Ghandy: “I went to Ramana Maharshi and asked him how to get rid of my periodic mental depression. He responded, 'Try to know first who is asking the question: Who are you?' I said that I could not understand that philosophy. Then he advised: 'If one cannot follow that method, then the other way is self-surrender.' That I could understand. I saw an old woman weeping on account of the death of her son. The Maharshi at once changed the trend of the conversation and asked her to surrender herself to him so that he could wipe away her sorrows. The next day I found her coming with a smiling face. This surrender I understand, but not your *Vedanta*. I can understand it intellectually but I cannot actualize it.”

Gurudas Maharaj [Atulananda]: “You don't believe in it. If you could have such belief, you should have no difficulty. If intellectually you could grasp it, as you say, then go beyond it by *neti, neti* [not this – not this]. Finally what remains is the Atman, your own Self.” (Atulananda: Atman Alone Abides, p. 217-8)

“The *Vedas*... are eloquent in *'neti' - 'neti'* (not this not this) and then remain silent. Their silence is the Real State. This is the meaning of exposition by silence. When the source of the 'I'-thought is reached it vanishes and what remains over is the Self.” (from Talk 130)

1/12/2004

Devaraja Mudaliar has recounted that Bhagavan, in his younger days, used to go to the summit of Arunachala by a number of different routes, or even without a route, whenever he felt like it. Only the grass-cutters were aware of some of these routes. He quotes the following story from Bhagavan:

"Sometimes people would come from Madras and other parts and, setting out to reach the top of the hill, would stray near Skandasramam. Finding me seated there, they would ask me for the route to the hill top. When I told them the route was to their right and turned northward, some would say, 'Do

you know who we are and wherefrom we come? We are from Madras. None of your tricks with us. The top is here straight above us and you want to lead us astray.' I used to keep quiet. They would try to climb in a straight line, and after a long time, they would return tired out, finding that all their efforts to reach the peak were in vain. Nearing me they would bow their heads in shame and go away, avoiding me." (from The Mountain Path, Sri Ramanasramam, Jayanti Issue 1999)

Here Bhagavan showed an easy and tested but seemingly circuitous route to the top but the advice was ignored. When talking of the spiritual path he offered the direct route and again his advice was often ignored.

8/12/2004

Vichara is the most intense activity of the entire mind to keep itself poised in pure Self-awareness.

10/12/2004

>That is the essence of the beauty of the teaching. What will the Self meditate on? It is Always Self-Abiding. That is why the ancients called it "One without a second." I am reminded of a story. Has anyone heard it? Aristotle said that God is Perfect. Therefore whatever God thinks about or focuses on must be Perfect as well. Certainly the Perfect One will not focus on imperfection. But since there is only One Perfection and That is God, it follows that God's essential nature must be Self-Abiding or God-Abiding. So God is constantly and continuously only meditating on God, there being nothing else. I heard that when I was in college and it seemed to me very Advaitic.<

Aristotle's theological argument comes to mind. e.g. "God and nature do nothing in vain."

"Aristotle believed that a form, with the exception of the Prime Mover, or God, had no separate existence, but rather was immanent in matter. Thus, in the Aristotelian system, form and matter together constitute concrete individual realities; the Platonic system holds that a concrete reality partakes of a form (the ideal) but does not embody it. Aristotle believed that form caused matter to move and defined motion as the process by which the potentiality of matter (the thing itself) became the actuality of form (motion itself). He

held that the Prime Mover alone was pure form and as the “unmoved mover” and final cause was the goal of all motion.” (The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition, 2001)

Aristotle concluded that God was the Unmoved Mover.

23/12/2004

>*To my knowledge, more often than not, Sri Ramana Bhagavan always chided His devotees rather than the 'supposed' antagonists whom they are criticizing or are angry with.*<

Regarding Bhagavan's teaching, the precedent was set with the 'Sat Darshana' affair. (See Talks 446[1]... and of course K. Lakshmana Sarma's (aka: 'Who') 'Maha Yoga' and elsewhere). When Lakshmana Sarma approached Sri Bhagavan and said in a prayerful attitude, “If your teachings are misinterpreted like this in your very lifetime, what will become of them in the future? Will not people think that you have approved this book? Should not such a wrong interpretation be openly condemned?” Sri Bhagavan replied, “*According to the purity of the mind of each person, the same teaching is reflected in different ways. If you think you can expound the teachings more faithfully, you may write your own commentary.*” (from Maha Yoga, vii) Here Bhagavan actively encouraged Lakshmana Sarma to proceed. In later years, Sri Bhagavan is said to have remarked that of all the commentaries Lakshmana Sarma's was indeed the best.

>*Many of you might know that there have been occasions when outright lies were perpetrated against Him [Ramana], when others tried to initiate him into sannyasa and when others proclaimed themselves to be even superior to Him. He not only did not mind these, he also discouraged his devotees from giving importance to any of these, isn't it?*<

[1] Sat Darshana Bhasya by Kapila Satria was published in 1936, and Maha Yoga by Lakshmana Sarma in 1937. From Talk 446: “Mr. Grand Duff was in the hall. Sri Bhagavan was mentioning some new publications and Maha Yoga among others. He also remarked that Mr. G.D. having read Sat Darsana Bhashya would be surprised at the different view of Maha Yoga. Both claim to represent Sri Bhagavan’s philosophy; but they differ so much that Maha Yoga actually condemns the other.”

These were personal attacks. They had nothing to do with his teaching. As such they were attacks which required no defence by Bhagavan, Himself, but might be defended by His *Bhaktas* who found them difficult to bear.

1/1/2005

>If Ramana takes a nights conscious (remembered) experience to touch the root and Muruganar and Sadhu Om take many years, your experience is yet another exemplary one (if you have really gained the EGOless state).

I am beginning to gain so much confidence that the Egoless state is only a few years or months away and that more and more (imagined) people will get there soon, thanks to your guide.<

"Time and space are imagined, ways of thinking, modes of perception. Only timeless reality is, and it is here and now. Whatever is time-bound is momentary and has no reality." (Nisargadatta)

"Do time and space exist apart from the ego? If we were bodies, then we would be subject to them. (But) say, are we bodies? Because the True Self is the same everywhere and at all times, therefore learn that He is the sole Reality, consuming both (time and space)." (Sarma: Sri Ramana Hrdayam (Revelation), v. 21)

This reminds me of an interesting conversation I had with one of the prevalent advertising *jnanis* that peddle their wares here in the UK. An Indian by birth, he claimed Ramana *parampara*, [traditional lineage of gurus] and had the rather ridiculous habit of telling people that they would 'perhaps' attain realisation in two or three births time. The very ego who thinks in such habitual ways is the sole problem. *Vichara...* the solution.

"If the mind is not made use of there is no concept of time. Time and space are in the mind but one's true state lies beyond the mind. The question of time does not arise at all to the one established in one's true nature. ... He who instructs an ardent seeker to do this or that is not a true master. The seeker is already afflicted by his activities and wants Peace and Rest. In other words he wants cessation of his activities. Instead of that he is told to something in addition to, or in the place of, his other activities. Can that be a help to the seeker?" (from Talk 601)

Progress is measured in terms of time. The concept of 'progress' is a tool of the ego. The three times (past, present, future) are erroneous. 'Time', the abode of all actions and processes, is responsible for their sequence. But it is dependent on 'person' and as such works wonderfully as a matter of convention, as it oversees the birth, existence and decay of 'things'. *Vichara* slices through such concepts. When there is absorption in one thought, there is no awareness of time, but a seeming eternal present. But even this present exists only in the mind and in relation to the past and future... Even here... Let *vichara* be done!! and the Heart will play its part automatically, stop all this activity and perceived timescales will cease. Where then is the need to wait for realisation? Any timescale is simply pandering to mindstuff. The state of Peace and Rest is beyond relative hypothesis. In truth it is the utter extinction of this thing named 'I', this person addicted to actions and processes.

>*For everyone else, it [time] arises.*<

This is down to outlook.

M.: “Again, there is no time and space in your sleep. They are concepts which arise after the 'I'-thought has arisen. Before the rise of the 'I'-thought the concepts are absent. Therefore you are beyond time and space. The 'I'-thought is only limited 'I'. The real 'I' is unlimited, universal, beyond time and space. They are absent in sleep. Just on rising from sleep, and before seeing the objective world, there is a state of awareness which is your pure Self. That must be known.”

D.: “But I do not realise it.”

M.: “It is not an object to be realised. You are that. Who is there to realise and what?” (from Talk 311)

“There is only one Infinite Self.” (from Talk 20)

“Mere ignorance does not rule out the fact of your existence.” (from Talk 427)

This frittering away of mental energy merely perpetuates the human condition and stimulates the endless chitter chatter of the uncontrolled mind and its supposition about 'one day'... 'one day soon'... 'soon... the egoless state will be won'. Fortunately the rejuvenating inner depth of mental silence is

available to **everyone,** right now, even amidst the noise of daily life. At times one might lose sight of this simple fact. And, when this happens, the illusion of free-will, and all this entails, will appear to take hold, in time and space.

"Time and space are only concepts of mind. But *swarupa* (the Real Self) lies beyond mind, time and space. Distance does not count in the Self." (from Talk 68)

"There is no non-self in fact. The non-self also exists in the Self. It is the Self which speaks of the non-self because it has forgotten itself, it conceives something as non-self, which is after all nothing but itself." (from Talk 310)

11/1/2005: Time and Space and Egoless State

>Let me clarify my position on why I feel there is time required to gain and establish the Egoless state.

Not many months ago, for the first time in my conscious memory, I did get a glimpse of the Egoless state that Ramana precisely describes in your first quote: "Just on rising from sleep, and before seeing the objective world, there is a state of awareness which is your pure Self. That must be known."

In fact Ramana says we constantly go through this state every night and morning and even between one thought and another. But since we are attached to one thought and jump to another before fully leaving the first one, we are unable to catch this Thoughtless State.

Coming back to this experience of the blank State, it happened out of the blue. […]

But I think that to reach there, all thoughts should subside either by ignoring them constantly or by cutting them with the Sword of discrimination in one sweep. Self-attention (awareness watching awareness), I see through practice, is when mind's predispositions (vasanas) are burnt or nullified as they rise.

THIS IS WHY I STILL BELIEVE that EXPERIENCE is a one-time thing, WHEREAS ONLY THROUGH PRACTICE IN TIME IT GETS ESTABLISHED AND BECOMES REALIZATION, NEVER TO BE SHAKEN OFF. (manolaya versus manonasa). […]

Maybe this is why Ramana got a glimpse in Madurai, then was still practising and even after coming to Arunachalam spent long years lost in unaware Samadhi. […]

So in the past few months, my question has been, how do I get to that state consciously. […]

I don't know whether you believe that by repeating these quotes of Ramana on reality of Time, or through meditation on them, or through trying to visualize their reality (bhava bala or abhyasa bala), they will come true. May be.<[1]

>Let me clarify my position on why I feel there is time > required to gain and establish the Egoless state.<

This belief/feeling that time is needed is mindstuff. I am well aware of this attitude. I knew someone who regular as clockwork set up dates by which time he would become realised. The dates came and went a new one being set each time. All the while he practiced vichara vigilantly and lo and behold when it was least expected the flimsy illusion was torn aside. Who needs this time? 'I' do. Who am 'I'?

>Maybe this is why Ramana got a glimpse in Madurai, then was still practising and even after coming to Arunachalam spent long years lost in unaware Samadhi.<

Please note: Bhagavan said: "In the vision of death, though all the senses were benumbed, the *aham sphurana* (Self-awareness) was clearly evident, and so I realised that it was that awareness that we call 'I', and not the body. This Self-awareness never decays. It is unrelated to anything. It is Self-luminous. Even if this body is burnt, it will not be affected. Hence, I realised on that very day so **clearly** that **that** was 'I'." (Nagamma: Letters; 22nd November, 1945)

And further when asked if there was a period when Bhagavan did *sadhana*, He states: "*Sadhana*? *Sadhana* for what? What is there to do *sadhana* for? Sitting like this is itself *sadhana*. I used to sit like this always. I used to close my eyes then; now I keep them open. That is the only difference. What is

[1] This questioner's explanations were very long and have been shortened.

now, was then also. What was there then, is also here now. *Sadhana* is necessary only if there is a thing other than 'I', Self. *Sadhana* is required only for one who does not look towards the Self which is permanent, but is deluded by looking at the body etc. which are transitory and delusive; but not for one who sees the Self and so does not see anything else different." (Letters, 23rd August, 1946)

Here and elsewhere Bhagavan is clear that there was no *sadhana* after the initial experience of Self. The fact that some devotees seem to claim otherwise is neither here nor there. Let's take Bhagavan's word for it!

>I don't know whether you believe that by repeating these quotes of Ramana on reality of Time, or through meditation on them, or through trying to visualize their reality (bhava bala or abhyasa bala), they will come true.<

This is a Ramana Maharshi site. Many members enjoy the quotes. Hence they are most welcome here. As to belief...? Truth is not dependent on belief nor does it need to come true. It is not a process of becoming... It ever IS. That one does not wish to accept it, or consider it, or decides that it does not fit with a certain perspective, is simply *upadhi* (limitation).

"Sadhana is necessary but for what purpose? His Self is there at all times and at all places. So there is no need to try and get it from somewhere else. *Sadhana* is only to get rid of the bodily and other illusions which are in the way of the self standing up as Self. This delusion arises only by thinking that this bodily world is real, instead of looking at the Self, which is real. *Sadhana* is only to get rid of this illusion. Otherwise, why would there be *sadhana* for the Self to attain its own Self? He who has realised his own Self does not recognize anything else." (Letters, 23rd August, 1946)

K. Lakshmana Sarma ('Who') reminds us in Guru Ramana Vachana Mala, "Never worry thinking, 'when shall I attain this state?'; this state transcends both space and time and is neither far nor near." Why then should we disregard this command of the Guru!

>THIS IS WHY I STILL BELIEVE that EXPERIENCE is a one-time thing, WHEREAS ONLY THROUGH PRACTICE IN TIME IT GETS ESTABLISHED AND BECOMES REALIZATION, NEVER TO BE SHAKEN OFF. (manolaya versus manonasa).<

Experience of the Self is constant. What 'I' believes is of no consequence. It is ego which comes and goes, believing this one day, that the next. Removing the ego is the only effective practice. Bhagavan has said that the temporary stillness of thoughts will never lead to total destruction of thought even though it last for thousands of years. The one who experiences such stillness must be enquired into. This same one considers that it will take such and such a time to attain salvation etc. His presence is excellent fodder for *vichara*. As long as there appears one who thinks they are progressing or feels there is no progress there is fodder for *vichara*. The annihilation of ego happens all at once and not in dribs and drabs but an increase in freedom from unwanted thoughts is said to be an indicator of the efficacy of the practice. *Atma Vidya* is not knowledge to be acquired but rather the giving up of one's ignorant outlook. The Self is already the Self.

13/3/2005

>*Would you please be my guru?*<

Oh no! It seems that Guru has become gurulAghava [of relative importance]. And we, the disciples, have subsequently become like the monkeys who sit around red ochre* trying to warm themselves.

* note: 'Red Ochre' is more widely known as *kumkum* or *kumkumum* in Tamil Nadu. It's the red powder placed on the *ajna* chakra (between the eyebrows) by Hindus and is offered on the tray by the Brahmins, along with *vibhuti* [the sacred ash of Lord *Siva*, signifying the residue or reminder after the ego has been burnt away].

>*Where then does this reference to the Guru and warmth come from?*<

The monkeys run here and there looking for the colour red because they associate red with warmth. It is hit or miss whether they get red ochre or fire. Their understanding is incomplete. Eventually they come to understand in full and bask in the sun which was all along the true source of heat.

Guru is within and not without. The attraction (reverence) is innate, and reverberates as one opens to the inner calling. One need **only** look within. There the Guru sits, eternal and self-evident. There Grace is, ever-radiating. It is not possible to move away from the warmth of this fire. This is the fire of fires. Whether, or not, there is an 'outward' manifestation is of no conse-

quence. Those who declare that Guru must be 'living' have yet to understand birth and death and remain with an extroverted vision. With this extroverted vision we can see many imaginary gurus, who appear to confer Grace, this of necessity based on the limited understanding we have as to what constitutes Guru. However, Grace is never conferred; **it always is**. **There is no intermediary.** Eventually one can but turn within and laugh at the absurdity of the search.

>If you feel like writing a bit more about your experience, I would be very grateful.<

OK.

When I was a child I came across a single paragraph, in the first Yoga book I read, which mentioned, in passing, an 'Indian Guru', named Sri Ramana Maharshi. The instruction He gave was very simple and seemed to make a great deal of sense. "Pursue the enquiry 'Who Am I?' relentlessly... Try to find out where the **'I'**-thought begins. Go on with your meditations. Keep turning your thought within. One day the wheel of thought will slow down and an intuition will mysteriously arise. Follow that intuition. Let your thinking stop and it will eventually lead you to the goal." This instruction blew my mind away (it was the late 60s!!), and this instruction was all that was necessary. **It made sense**. Over the years many 'gurus' passed through Edinburgh and some of them I met out of curiosity.

>Miles, can you please say something more about shabdapurvayoga? You have mentioned it several times - at other places also. Is it a certain form of exercise?<

Bhartrhari has stated that Grammar is the straight road for those who would attain liberation in *Brahman*. The twentieth century Sage of Arunachala, Ramana Maharshi, a proponent of *ajatavada*, similarly referred to the discipline of *atma vichara* as the straight path to Self-Realisation.

As we have seen, the essence of Bhartrhari's method is indeed *atma vichara*. Bhartrhari's insistence that any appearance of parts is simply a fiction, at all levels of the language system, mark him as an uncompromising non-dualist. This analysis may at times be considered by some as beyond reason and this is an important point. *Buddhi* stands at the doorway to liberation. Turning one way *buddhi*, 'in the form of the enjoyer, that which is enjoyed, and the

enjoyment,' wanders, discriminates and rationalises a sequential description of the empirical world view. Multiple views dependent on *ahamkara* ['I'-maker, ego] are then observed.

"Although undifferentiated it (*Brahman*) behaves as if differentiated because of its (denotative) potentials. Turning the other way *buddhi* stops dead in its tracks and *Brahman* shines forth in undifferentiated splendour as always. His philosophy does not negate the empirical world but rather returns it to its rightful place as an uncaused appearance in *Brahman*. In this his philosophy is synonymous with that of the *ajatavadin*." (Miles Wright: An Exploration of the Metaphysical Rationale at the Heart of Bhartrhari's Vakyapadiya; Grammer as the Door to Liberation, a Problem for the Modern Scholar?, Universität Edinburgh, 2000)

5/5/2005

Dalai Lama said, "Tomorrow or the next life, you never know which will come first." And, with this in mind, we should practice. Yet rather than that we get involved in all these plans and works. In 'everyday life' there is need of calendars to plan the week etc. This is fine. But why apply this to Bhagavan's teaching? Then it becomes 'work'. Work which we attach ourselves to. We must write this or write that. Who says? What's the motivation? Can one write about a subject which one knows absolutely nothing about? Because this is what happens again and again. Everyone wants to be the expert, to be praised as the great devotee etc. This is all bollocks! We dress these ideas up, disguise them under the banner 'God's will' or 'Bhagavan's will'. How do we know what Bhagavan's will is? One can only talk about 'Absolute' will in retrospect. Never at the beginning of a project we just dreamt up. What is important is whether or not one 'chooses' to associate with illusion or truth. [A] says: "[B] says this, [C] says that etc." Does that mean that [A] should jump up and do it? If either of these characters are trying to get you to 'do' something other than Self enquiry then they are charlatans living in the world of make-believe and working on their own agendas.

There is a roundabout of confusion which one really needs to step off. Until that happens what can be done. When one travels anywhere one follows the signpost, or asks directions, at the start, and goes to the destination. When someone else travels to the same destination from another start point he also

follows a signpost albeit a different post. Sometimes along the way one may need to ask again for clarification from someone who actually knows the way. If one asks an idiot, a mischief maker, or someone with a selfish agenda the likelihood is that one will be sent off in the wrong direction. If one becomes overly attached to one or other signpost, or finds it difficult to choose between them, one travels nowhere and never reaches the destination. One becomes caught up in a ridiculous illusion. What is important: holding on to the signpost or travelling the path leading to the destination? Many people become hung up on personalities, that is how institutionalised religion arises. Then the arguments start as to which is best leading to confusion or worse – fanaticism.

5/7/2005: A question about Self Enquiry

>I'm new to this group and a devotee of Sri Ramana. There is one practical thing in His teachings that it is still not so clear to me. Sometimes he says that Atma Vichara is for the ones who are prepared – for the 'ripe souls' – and in other occasions he says that Atma Vichara is for anyone who fells drawn or attracted to such practice.

I personally feel very attracted to Self Enquiry – as I'm trying to practice it now – but for sure I'm not a 'ripe' or mature soul. So my question is: should I continue Atma Vichara or should I first devote myself to some "preliminary" practices and exercises (like meditation on my breath, neti-neti, "I am He", etc.)? Does anybody know any quotation of the Maharshi which clarifies this?<

Here are a few quotes which mention 'ripeness', as requested.

"Can this path of enquiry be followed by all aspirants? This is suitable only for ripe souls. The rest should follow different methods according to the state of their minds." (Spiritual Instruction)

"The Guru will go with the disciple in his own path and then gradually turn him onto the Supreme path at the ripe moment. Suppose a car is going at top speed. To stop it at once or to turn it at once would be attended with disastrous consequences." (Mudaliar: Day by Day, 22/11/1945 Afternoon)

D. "Cannot Grace hasten ripeness in the seeker?"

M. “Leave it all to the Master. Surrender to Him without reserve. One of two things must be done; either surrender yourself, because you realize your inability and need a Higher Power to help you; or investigate into the cause of misery, go into the Source and so merge in the Self. Either way, you will be free from misery. God or Guru never forsakes the devotee who has surrendered himself.” (Maharshi's Gospel, p. 36)

D: “Although I have listened to the explanation of the characteristics of enquiry in such great detail, my mind has not gained even a little peace. What is the reason for this?”

M: “The reason is the absence of strength or one-pointedness of the mind.”

D: “What is the reason for the absence of mental strength?”

M: “The means that make one qualified for enquiry are meditation, yoga, etc. One should gain proficiency in these through graded practice, and thus secure a stream of mental modes that is natural and helpful. When the mind that has in this manner become ripe, listens to the present enquiry, it will at once realize its true nature which is the Self, and remain in perfect peace, without deviating from that state. To a mind which has not become ripe, immediate realization and peace are hard to gain through listening to enquiry. Yet, if one practices the means for mind-control for some time, peace of mind can be obtained eventually.” (Self Enquiry, Q&A 19 and 20)

19/11/2005: Is the awareness omnipresent?

>Isn't this awareness just localized to me as appose to being omnipresent as its claimed to be? Though I have my own answers to this, I need to know if the rest of you feel that it’s a logically correct answer.<

Will the one who is curious about omnipresence ever experience such a thing?... No!... the *upadhi* [limitation] of individuality precludes it. So what is the point of pursuing such a question? It makes for polemics and no more. Rather, one should take this experience of awareness/existence and trace it to its source.

>Then I wonder how Ramana could feel one with a monkey, cow or a human. How he could understand there feelings and could realize whether

somebody achieved moksha or not, like in the case of his mother or the cow.<

Indeed. Once one starts to wonder about these things they become self-perpetuating.

>I feel there is a certain state of being completely enlightened where all such questions will fall off due to such a blissful experience, which we are yet to have got it 100%.<

The 'I' that feels this is the sole barrier.

>It is a short state of manonasa [destruction of the mind]. This is a sporadic instance where-in you loose the touch with this conscious too and you are in an undefinable void. Which, you can only realize after waking up from that state. Usually this is a state where you don't quite know how long you were in that state but you will be aware of being in that state only. This to me sounds almost equal to deep sleep.<

What you describe here is *manolaya*.

layavinASane ubhayarodhane |
layagatampunarbhavatinomrtam ||

Abeyance and destruction are the two types of control. That which is in abeyance comes back again, **not that which is destroyed.**

(Upadesa Saram, 13)

There is no short state of *manonasa*. That would be *manolaya*. If mind comes back it has not been destroyed.

"Many fear that with the destruction of the mind, they themselves will cease to exist. But *manonasa* [destruction of the mind] is nothing to be feared. What we conceive of now as mind is only a combination of *rajas* and *tamas*. By their elimination the mind becomes pure. Such a mind is one's own *swarupa* [real nature]. The activities of one whose mind has been purified by Self-attention will continue to be done. He will even appear to do the work with greater attention and involvement. Yet he is unaffected and always stays in the felicity of non-dual bliss." (related by Viswanatha Swami in: Power of the Presence, vol 2)

Whether mind appears to dominate or not, Self-awareness (the Heart) is eternally the natural state. The mind is merely a transient phase. Self-enquiry brushes the gossamer-like curtain of limitation aside. (cf. Talk 252)

10/10/2006: *Satsang*

I received a scolding from a dear friend the other day. He was extolling the virtues of that vacuous habit, the mainstay of many 'seekers' – bee-like participation in the "organised Ramana, or other, *satsang*" – and I suggested that his regular participation in these 'events' was equivalent to childish superstition at best and spiritual tourism at worst. I also suggested that his "I-spy book[1] of *Satsangs*" must surely be full by now. He was taken aback.

sat sanga – association with the wise. Ramana said *"sat* is within us" (Talk 126) – and he has also said (in various places) that association (*sanga*) with the wise (*sat*) is of great help.

The unwarranted assumption that any event which advertises itself as "*satsang*" is indeed "association with the Wise" is the problem. Organised *satsangs* are, more often than not, associations with lots of " *satsangis*" and "*satsang* organisers" chanting, discussing diverse methods of realisation, and having tea. In effect, association with the other.

If the idea that "I am a *satsangi*" continues, and becomes an ingrained part of your identity, despite repeated visits to the *satsangs,* then such *satsangs* appear to be counterproductive – don't they?) *Satsanga* is about association with Truth or with one who has realised the Truth. It is not about attending courses or commercial *jnanis*. Pick up Talks and read it. That is *satsanga*.

20/10/2006: What is Grace?

"Grace is the Self. It is not something to be acquired. All that is necessary is to know its existence. In the same way, the sun is pure brightness; it does not know darkness, although others speak of darkness fleeing away on its approach. Like darkness, ignorance is a phantom, not real. Because of its unreality, it is said to be removed when its unreality is discovered. The sun is there and shines and you are surrounded by sunlight; still, if you would

[1] I Spy is an American series of children's books. Each page features a photograph showing various objects, and the clues indicate which objects need to be found.

know the sun you must turn your eyes in its direction and look at it. Similarly, Grace is only to be found by effort, although it is here and now." (from Chapter 2 of 'The Teachings of Bagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi In His Own Words' edited by Arthur Osborne)

What is Grace not?

Grace is not the selective picking of certain petty or major events, perceived as positive in one's life, which one then spouts on and on about ad infinitum, while eschewing all the events perceived as negative. Nor is it the absurd belief that one individual has been chosen over another. The idea that Grace is bestowed on one to the detriment of another is mindstuff.

As the quote from Ramana reveals, Grace is not something to be acquired. It is something eternally existent only waiting to be discovered. Although always here and now it takes effort to discover it. Grace is turning towards the source of Grace – no more no less.

Whether or not you get this job or that is just one of those things!

In Day by Day, Ramana says, "All the activities that the body is to go through are determined when it first comes into existence. It does not rest with you to accept or reject them. The only freedom you have is to turn your mind inward and renounce activities there." (1-6-46)

This 'mind-turning' is the blossoming of Grace.

2/3/2007: Awareness watching awareness

>I noticed your comments in your original post about "awareness watching awareness". There is something about the description of that approach which doesn't quite sit right for me, but I may have misunderstood the authors meaning when he coined that particular term. Would you extend your reservations to Sadhu Om's understanding of Atma Vichara, with its emphasis on 'Self Attention', which I believe is where the author of 'awareness watching awareness' took his line, so to speak?<

If by 'author' you refer to Michael Langford, I understand from his carefully crafted and voluminous website[1] that he discovered "Awareness watching

[1] It is no longer exists.

Awareness" himself as a revelation. There is no mention of Sadhu Om on that page. Perhaps that has been mentioned elsewhere. I know little of what Sadhu Om may or may not have said. It all seems to be hearsay. You will also find a statement on that page which declares that "47. Asking 'Who am I?' or asking 'To whom do these thoughts arise?' are easy instructions to follow as long as one stays in the realm of thought." It is an interesting statement. It seems to be a correct statement. Something similar has been said by Ramana himself: "So long as there is *vichara* there is duality". This is the point. For Michael to dismiss it in such an off hand manner is a mystery.

"I" can never know "I AM". *Vichara* takes one to the point where "ego-I" begins. "I" can go no further. To assume that "I" can know "I AM" is like the carpenter's hammer jumping up and saying "Look over there! That's the man that wields me."... and then going further and saying "I am, in truth, that man." It makes no sense. Mind/ego is at best a tool.

Lakshmana Sarma said, "if the mind were real, then the world would be real." (in Sri Ramanaparavidyopanishad) Similarly the idea that the reflection of consciousness which is "I" can look back at Consciousness, and that's the end of the story, is flawed. It's a valuable tool, no doubt, but it is not the end of the [my] story. It is in the realm of mind, is mind real? We cannot ascribe reality to the reflection and then hope that the reflection will by looking, wallow in Reality. The "I AM" is not the reflected awareness of mind. Where it shines no reflection is visible. One must enter into the Heart not peer into it. Be "I AM" don't think (watch) "I AM". Know "I AM" - don't merely pay attention to it! The mind that looks back is the impostor. Who does this watching? There is an important question begging. "I AM" does not say "I am", it simply is.

Regarding awareness watching awareness I have no argument with it as a well known yogic practice. It begs the question though!

But what do I know about these things? I have written no books and made no discoveries. So please feel free to disregard this in its entirety. It may just be the limitation of language that causes all the confusion. Find the source of language! Rest there and wait.

From a note to the moderators of the group:

The author [Michael Langford] confirms that this is a meditation practice and not the inherently natural practice of *vichara*. See v. 16 of Upadesa Saram: "The mind, withheld from seeing the multiple universe, becomes the consciousness of the Self… that is the vision of true wisdom." There is no watching. There is only Being. The mind that now sees otherness, when purified, returns to its natural state.

Heart, diving, location, I-thought, these are all concepts. Searching, inquiring are also delays. The mind that looks for concepts will find only concepts. The point of *vichara* is to go beyond such 'thinking'.

"When sought within 'What is the place from which it rises as "I"?', 'I' (the ego) will die. This is Self-inquiry." (Forty Verses, v. 19) This is Self Enquiry, so where's the problem?

The problem lies in the meanderings of an individual who thinks he has found something that no one else has noticed and now wishes to share it to save all others. As an 'ego preservation strategy', to coin the author's oft-used phrase, this is a pretty nifty one.

The ego must merge in awareness and not merely observe it. The observation is only the beginning – then that which is observed must be enquired into. For mind to simply abide as Awareness the barrier of *ahamkara* must be destroyed. This is the simple truth.

We live in an age where 'political correctness' demands siting on fences in order not to offend anyone. C'est la vie. Bhavatu!

On the one hand we recommend such and such and on the other hand we continue to fraternise with and recommend all and sundry who advocate the opposite. Strange… don't you think? We write about Bhagavan and his teaching but still leave sufficient ambiguity so as not to upset the newagers. Quite frankly… we're pathetic, or should that be the modern curse… apathetic. Bhagavan has left plenty of documentation so that we can get it right. Unfortunately we make decisions as to what we like or don't like. For many devotees Ramana has become a hobby which pulls them together with 'like minded souls'… often these 'like-minded souls' travel here and there to this or that teacher becoming more and more confused. But let's not get started

on the advertising *jnanis*!! All that is necessary is *vichara*… and/or Bhagavan's alternative approaches leading to *vichara*. If we choose to go off travelling here and there to this and that teacher who quite blatantly dismisses Bhagavan, then there is no commitment to the tasks at hand [FULL STOP]. This is not the talk of a purist – it is common sense. Commitment to Guru is a must. No wonder people become confused.

13/5/2007: A short snippet of a long reply by the questioner:

>The name 'atma-vichara' (is truly applicable) only to (the practice of) always being (or remaining) having placed (our) mind in atma (our own real self). In other words, atma-vichara is not any form of 'doing' but is only the state of just 'being' with our mind established in self, that is, in our essential self-conscious being, 'I am'.

Therefore self-attention is self-abidance, the state of just being as we really are, that is, as our true thought-free self-conscious being.

During sadhana or practice we feel that we must make effort to attend to self, but when we attain true self-knowledge, we will discover that we call 'self-attention' is actually just our effortless natural state of self-consciousness. Therefore to know ourself as we really are, all we need do is to remain as our naturally self-conscious being.<

[There was a long dispute. It was obvious that Miles completely disagreed and considered this to be a complete distortion of Ramana's teaching.]

14/5/2007: *Atma Vichara* is a question

>You say that: "The fact that Sri Bhagavan expressed his teachings in the form of the question 'who am I?' is very significant. It is significant not because the practice of atma vichara is an action of questioning, which it is not, but because it is an investigation or enquiry in search of the true knowledge that we now appear to lack."<

I can only assume from this bold statement that all those who have described the method, as a question, having asked Maharshi and then listened to Maharshi describing it in full detail, are mistaken. What a bunch of numbskulls they must be! Thankfully because of the stupidity of all those devotees and of the Maharshi, himself, because of his inability to convey information,

some of us were foolish enough to accept that the Enquiry is a question by the ego, into the ego. The search into true knowledge is nothing but a polemical red herring. There is nothing we lack, that is a dualistic perspective, there is simply a supposed obstruction. Enquiry into the ego is all that is required, the rest is not in 'our' hands.

23/8/2007: Why does it matter?

>On the path of Atma Vichara (or any other path) there is a change or movement from dvaita to advaita, from ajnana to jnana, from darkness to enlightenment etc... This change need to happen somewhere. Now my understanding that everything that does change, is not real, because if it changes it must have a start and therefore an end and therefore it is not eternal i.e. NOT REAL. Now, my question is, if the whole path is not real why does it matter, if I do an effort to follow a certain sadhana or not, if at the bottom line it doesn't have any meaning because it is still in the realm of maya. Some were deep just next to 'I', I have a feeling that it does matter if you do it or not, but I cannot understand why. I would appreciate some insight into the matter.<

It doesn't!

Atma Vichara is *dvaita* (dual). It is a movement in *ajnana* (ignorance). Neither *advaita* (non-dual) nor *jnana* (knowledge) move. Ego might be tempted by *sadhana*, Self has no need for it. This is the paradox.

The idea about movement from darkness to light is simply mind's play. When the obstruction vanishes, it takes the shadows with it. Light's brightness was ever unaffected.

For *Vichara*, no *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) is required other than the discipline of remembrance. Since this discipline is innate, in truth, there is no discipline, as such.

"Reality is simply the loss of the ego. Destroy the ego by seeking its identity. Because the ego is no entity it will automatically vanish and Reality will shine forth by itself. This is the direct method. Whereas all other methods are done, only retaining the ego. In those paths there arise so many doubts, and the eternal question remains to be tackled finally. But in this method the

final question is the only one and it is raised from the very beginning. No *sadhanas* are necessary for engaging in this quest." (Talk 146)

"*Sadhana* is only to get rid of the bodily and other illusions which are in the way of the self standing up as Self. This delusion arises only by thinking that this bodily world is real, instead of looking at the Self, which is real. *Sadhana* is only to get rid of this illusion. Otherwise, why should there be *sadhana* for the Self to attain its own Self? He who has realised his own Self does not recognize anything else." (Nagamma: Letters, 23/8/1946)

31/8/2007: Who is Ramana Maharishi's successor?

Questioner 1: >I see there are people claiming to be Ramana Maharishi's successor. It is very confusing with so many variations of his teaching beginning to be pushed. If not claiming to be successors they are claiming to represent his real teaching but they conflict with each other and with published accounts.<

Indeed, it can be confusing. Some folks (even Ramana Maharshi-ites) can get over enthusiastic in their desire to spread the word and save everybody. (Indeed, there is a fundamental flaw there!)

A good teacher of course offers up wonderful fare, a not so good teacher might forget to knead his dough appropriately, apply insufficient heat and end up with a half-baked loaf that may look great on the outside but prove to be decidedly unpalatable in substance. (Sorry for the baker's analogy – I'm in bread making mode today.)

Let's face it any man and his dog can speak in *advaita*-tongues and sound very impressive. Woof!! (one woof! not two!)

Maharshi's teachings stand the test of time, just as they are. They are well-baked, extremely palatable, and efficacious. Just what's needed, no more, no less. Who Am I?, Talks, Day by Day, Upadesa Saram, Maha Yoga, Ramana Maharshi, the Path of Self Knowledge – English, Tamil, whatever. There are books available for free download.

If you find a teacher won't agree with the older devotees and sees fit to re-bake that which is already perfect fare then perhaps they are mouldy old

bakers and should be passed on by. Mind you there are lessons to be learned from them too.

Questioner 2: >Ramana saw no differences. He saw no enlightened people, no unenlightened. To appoint a 'successor' then he would have had to set up some difference. This would then be an inherent contradiction.<

Questioner 1: *>Yes, but am I Ramana, I see differences. I see gurus charging $300 or more for "retreats". They claim to celebrate Ramana's words. Who appointed these? Don't these gurus see differences and unenlightened people? They rely on the difference of enlightenment to earn. These people are the contradiction. Are they Ramana's successors?*

It seems Ramana devotees simply offer foolish platitudes to themselves and others these days.<

It is a strange old world. *Laukikatva* – worldliness or the desire to participate in the world of duality – is not traditionally associated with the *jnani*.

Loka vichara [investigation of the world] is the modern way. The idea of a proactive *jnani* is an interesting one, don't you think!

For *atma vichara* there is really no need to go on retreats with "like-minded" souls. Those like-minded souls will be off on their Reiki retreat next weekend and, perhaps, Vipassana Meditation Retreat the following. Hobbies are important, don't you think? Reminds me of my I-Spy books when I was a child.

Indeed (duck-billed) platitudes can be an unfortunate side effect of aligning oneself with the greatest guru of the modern age (or, indeed, nonduality, in general). Selectively sifting non-dual statements can provide a wealth of "get out off jail free" cards. In effect, if one learns to use platitudes, one does not have to engage with practice. One can simply set up as a teacher of *loka vichara* and advertise one's wares.

>It is use by devotees who care not for meaning of Bhagavans utterances that make same sayings platitudes. They become nonsense religious utterances used to quiet people who ask questions and boost egos of devotee who use them. […]. Sri Ramana Maharishis teachings are forgotten by devotees I meet instead they do puja to him and make him godhead. It must be easy

to do that than practice teaching, so sad to see. Thus the Path is blocked by egos everywhere.<

I wouldn't worry over much about this. It went on during Maharshi's lifetime too. There are always lame excuses not to practice. They are never valid. As long as there is a thinking mind *vichara* is possible.

"In the evening came a visitor, a big and prosperous looking Punjabi Sikh gentleman dressed completely in European clothes. Noting his discomfort to do the full *pranam* of Indian etiquette, the Maharshi immediately set him at rest saying it was unnecessary and got him a chair to sit. The gentleman said plaintively that he was pining for peace of mind. The Maharshi asked who it was that was pining. The visitor was puzzled; in humble and anxious tones he pleaded that he was too ignorant and busy for such deep introspection, but would be grateful for some *japam* or *puja* prescribed in the Maharshi's own words and blessings, which he could manage to perform within the short time he could spare. He was told that devoting the same time for the enquiry as he could spare for the *japam* or *puja* would amply repay, and with practice it would operate during his usual busiest work. Failing in his repeated and varied entreaties, the visitor sadly asked whether, after having come all the way with high hopes, the Maharshi was sending him away empty handed. He was assured with compassion that he should not think so. The next morning the Maharshi cited verses from Yoga Vasishta got printed by Frydman for the benefit of the visitor. The visitor, then revived in spirits, rushed back to catch the train." (in Surpassing Love and Grace, M.S. Madhava Rao)

6/9/2007: Sanskrit term '*sannidhi'*

>From David Godmans Mountain Path article concerning the new translation of 'Guru Vachaka Kovai': "Bhagavan took the position that the Self never performs or initiates any action. However, he also maintained that one who abides motionless and desireless as the Self creates an energy or a presence that takes care of all devotees' desires or needs. Bhagavan used the Sanskrit term 'sannidhi' o describe this energy field that is generated and sustained by the jnani's Self-abidance [...] Does anyone of our 'Pandits' here know the exact meaning of this 'sannidhi'?<

sannidhi – juxtaposition; proximity, vicinity, presence, existence

There is a nice bit in Talk 466 which sums it up nicely. It has been posted before but what the hell, here it is again:

M.: "`Witness' is applicable when there is an object to be seen. Then it is duality. The Truth lies beyond both. In the mantra, sakshi cheta kevalo nirgunascha, the word *sakshi* must be understood as *sannidhi* (presence), without which there could be nothing. See how the sun is necessary for daily activities. He does not however form part of the world actions; yet they cannot take place without the sun. He is the witness of the activities. So it is with the Self. "

Mountain and Branch

18/9/2007

>There has always been a lot of misunderstanding when it comes to how is the Vichara to be done. I try to be attentive to my awareness or my sense of self or being or aliveness. Is that the right way.<

It may be that the confusion is caused because 'I' am never clever enough to theorise on *Vichara* (Self Enquiry). It is certainly the case that when I

write on such things I get tied in knots. I lay the whole thing out for all to see, step back to admire it, but inevitably the very I, that is the subject of the enquiry, stands watching, unnoticed.

The 'I' that tries is the 'I' that is the subject of enquiry. Whatever this 'I' tries to do is mindstuff.

Our assumed awareness is a mere reflection of true unassumed awareness. When one walks over the brink of a hill to be met, unexpectedly, by an unbelievable, breath-taking display of natural beauty, that is pure awareness. In that immediate moment there is no interfering ego.... The same can be said of other sudden and unexpected situations – horror, fear, surprise etc. etc. – which one comes upon denuded of ego, if only for a moment. Then the ego pops up to describe, remember and catalogue, and the moment is lost. No matter how often the moment's memory is rehearsed, it is only reflected memory.

The Enquiry (*Vichara*) is an enquiry into ego. It is not an enquiry into Self. It is not an enquiry into awareness. It as an enquiry into the thief which has stolen awareness. It is an enquiry into the insentient tool which, although unable to work without unseen backing, has come to believe that it is the Self.

20/9/2007

>Thanks for your response. I don't know if you've read the Path of Ramana by Sadhu Om. He says the way to do Vichara is by being grounded in the 'I feeling'. There is an awareness in us of which we are all aware besides our thoughts and feelings. We know we are conscious. So I watch my consciousness. This I have been told by some Ramana devotees is the correct way. So there is much confusion on this subject and a lack of proper understanding as to what constitutes Vichara.

The first book I read of Ramana about 10 years ago was by Arthur Osbourne. I think he recommended the verbal questioning method. If it is an inquiry it has to be done verbally or one just has to watch one's consciousness intently. So your comments are invited and I hope I get a few more opinions on the subject as I think this needs to be cleared to everyone's satisfaction.<

The ‘I’ feeling/sense is quite simply the root of ego.

From Mudaliar, Day by Day, 31/5/1946: “... so long as there is the feeling ‘I’, it must have a source from whence it came.”

If one remains attached to this root thoughts are kept at bay. The primary means of remaining here is by enquiring as and when mind drifts and allows spurious thoughts to arise. This is the point of the “Who am I?” method of Enquiry. If mind drifts into the mindstuff of thought it gets nudged back by the Enquiry. If mind sits still there is no need for the Enquiry question, one simply waits. Ego can go no further under its own steam.

From Lakshmana Sarma’s ‘Maha Yoga’: “When the sense of ‘I am the body’ arises, then the notions of ‘you’ and ‘he’ also arise; but when, by the Quest of the Truth underlying the ‘I’, the ‘I’-sense is put an end to, then the notions of ‘you’ and ‘he’ also cease; that which then shines as the Sole Remainder is the true Self.” (p. 69)

The ‘I’-sense goes out as a thief. The whole point of Enquiry is to stop this thief from venturing out willy-nilly and stealing ‘experiences’.

Again from ‘Maha Yoga’: “...ego has an element of reality mixed up in it, namely the light of Consciousness, manifest as ‘I am’. This ‘I am’, we know, is real, because it is the part that is constant and unchanging. We need to reject the unreal part, the sheaths or bodies, and take the remainder, the pure ‘I am’.

This ‘I am’ is a clue to the finding of the real Self. By holding on to this clue, the Sage tells us, we can surely find the Self. He once compared the seeker of the Self to a dog seeking his master, from whom he had been parted. The dog has something to guide him, namely the master’s scent. By following the scent, leaving everything else, he ultimately finds his master. The ‘I am’ in the ego-sense is just like the master’s scent for the dog. It is the only clue the seeker has for finding the Self. But it is an infallible clue. He must get and keep hold of it, fix his mind on it to the exclusion of all other things. It will then surely take his mind to the Self, the source of the ‘I am’.” (p. 142)

On page 146, Sri K. Lakshmana Sarma continues: “The Quest of the real Self consists in gathering together all the energies of body and mind by ban-

ishing all alien thoughts, and then directing all those energies into a single current, namely the resolve to find the answer to the question 'Who am I?' The question may also take the form of 'Whence am I?' 'Who am I?' means 'What is the Truth of me?'; 'Whence am I?' means 'What is the Source of the sense of self in the ego?'"

Lakshmana Sarma received one on one tutelage for years from Maharshi. Surely, this record must count for something.

21/9/2007: Different approaches to Self-Enquiry

>In this discussion about approaching Self Enquiry; from my own experience, I found it necessary to read Bhagavan's Essays 'Who Am I' and 'Self Enquiry' in Collected Works and the 3 chapters in David Godman's Anthology 'Be As You Are' , on Self Enquiry. From this it becomes evident that there is more than one approach to the practice. Ramana suggests 'choose that way which is easiest for you'-'get into the heart any way you can'.

1. We have the Questioning method – which Miles has outlined in this topic.

2. There is an approach advocated by the late, respected Sadhu Om in his book on Self Enquiry which may be summarised as 'being aware of one's awareness' which is also mentioned in this topic.

3.Diving Into the Heart. This is described fully in the Sat Darshan Bhashya by K in the commentary on verse 30 of 'The Forty Verses' following the Eki Sloka given to Ganapati Muni Verse 2 Ch 2 of the Ramana Gita. Here with or without breath restraint one takes the attention from between the eyebrows and plunges it through the doorway, on the right side of the chest, into the Heart, searching for the source of the 'I Thought'. Although this practice starts with mental attention, it eventually moves into the Heart where the quest continues.

4. Also there is a Pranayama approach, described by Ramana in Talks Page 59 [Talk 54] where on inhalation one mentally asks 'who am I', and then on retention 'I Am He' and on exhalation 'I Am Not The Body'. There are other references in Talks with Ramana Maharshi- see index on Pranayama and Self Enquiry.

No doubt there are other approaches which members might suggest. Self Enquiry is not easy and demands a real yearning to commence, study, and persistent, determined application.

[Later] I ommited to mention another approach – that of 'Holding onto the inner feeling of 'I' '- this is described by David Godman on Page 56 of his book 'Be As You Are'.<

Another Questioner: >Concerning this topic the following correspondence may be informative. In my opinion the answer from Ramanashram is very "classical". At that time I posed the following question to Ramanashram:

12. September 2000, to Sri Ramanasramam

Dear Mr. Ramanan[1],

[...] Let me explain: Some time ago I had an experience of Mano-Laya (?), a complete blackout of all thoughts in which only my surprise was left. It happened during the meditation as i was concentrating on the thought "I". But to come into this condition, an enormous effort was necessary. I don't think that I can find this effort once again. I also doubt whether this is really necessary. I have on the other side in my practice mostly the feeling that "nothing happens actually".

Sri Ramana Maharshi writes, that one shall concentrate intensively and with staying power on the feeling "I am". However Sri Annamalai Swami himself wrote, that it suffices to be relaxed in the feeling "I am". Well, shall I more relax or make an effort? Can you me say something to this?

Reply, 28. September 2000

Dear Sir,

with respect to the experience of "black-out of all thoughts" and the question of having "to make enormous effort", the recurring focus must be on who had the blocking out? & "who feels the need for effort?" & who feels "I cannot find this effort again." Focus on that I. This is the SAME on saying "Rest in that I". The two statements are different only for the ego that wants results.

[1] V.S. Ramanan, the former president of Ramanasramam

As long as there are vasanas of a worldly-career, this "Focussing" or "Resting" will be experienced as being the result of great effort. The entity which has the experience of making this "great effort" must have the clarity to renounce even "great effort" as concept.

Yours in Bhagavan,

V.S. Ramanan

PRESIDENT<

The Ashram response definitely sounds like *vichara*, to me. Wonderful! Classic Ramana Maharshi Ashram, indeed. Very similar to a response received here in 1981. Some things do not need to change.

'of the "everything is just hunky dory let's stick it all in the pot and see what comes out" brigade. The one who wants to have all the options, melting them down into egoistic smoothie gunk, is the very one to be enquired into.

Many of the methods that have been discussed may be valuable aids to vichara... however, when all the various aids are taken to be the practice, the practice, itself, is ignored. The aids must be understood for what they are. As long as these methods do not engage with the ego, they are not *vichara*.

Vichara practice engages with the ego-I. It does not go off looking for awareness, or contemplating breath, it engages with the one who has decided that such a search is the true practice. Who looks? Who is aware? *Vichara* engages with and removes this ultimately fictitious thief, the one that searches, the one that is aware. He will no longer be there in the final cut.

26/9/2007: Maharshi's humour

"Once, a boy was seated in front of Sri Bhagavan. Flies were troubling him and he was killing them. Seeing this Bhagavan told him: 'Don't kill them; it is wrong.' After some time the boy looked at Bhagavan intensely and remarked: 'You say killing is wrong. I was only killing little flies which were giving me trouble, but you have killed a big tiger and you are sitting on its skin. How can it be?' Bhagavan laughed and said: 'Yes, what he says is quite right!'" (from Humour of Sri Bhagavan, recorded by Evelyn Kaselow, in 'Surpassing Love and Grace')

>In my eyes this story is not an example of Ramanas humour but of a (classic) misunderstanding on the side of the boy. The same misunderstanding shows up in another posting here. Bhagavan was not laughing because of a joke but to drop the subject which the boy could not grasp.<

The story in question appears under the title "Humour of Sri Bhagavan" in the book 'Surpassing Love and Grace'. Clearly the recorder found it humorous.

I must agree with Evelyn Kaselow. Here, in Scotland, humour is often used in situations of incongruity and absurdity. I feel that this was, indeed, one of those situations. The story reminds me of the mondos [instructions by answering questions] which took place between the old Channa [Zen] masters and their students. In this one, Master was trounced by the student. This added to Maharshi's great amusement.

This same boy was involved in another incident as follows: "The same boy had the habit of wasting food served on his leaf-plate while seated with others. Once Bhagavan told him that he should not leave anything on the plate when he finished eating. That day too the boy could not eat everything, but stuffed something into his mouth and took out the empty leaf. Bhagavan saw him take out the empty leaf. However, the boy after throwing away the leaf also spat out the food that he had stuffed in his mouth. It was reported to Bhagavan. He enjoyed the trick of the boy and gave a hearty laugh." (in Surpassing Love and Grace)

23/11/2007: 'The Path of Sri Ramana' by Sri Sadhu Om

[Someone gave the link to Michael James book: 'The Path of Sri Ramana' by Sri Sadhu Om (Appendix & Part I). It is no longer in use, now http://happinessofbeing.blogspot.com/2007/11/path-of-sri-ramana-part-one-e-book-copy.html]

Regarding the links given – does Sri Sadhu Om really say that *atma vichara* is not an action of thought? Surely not! Enquiry can only be an action, by ego, of, and in, thought. The Self has no *vichara*!!

The following may be of interest in this respect.

Dr. Srinivasa Rao asked Bhagavan, "When we enquire within ‘who am I?' what is that?"

Bhagavan: “It is the ego. It is only that which makes the *vichara* also. The Self has no *vichara*. That which makes the enquiry is the ego. The `I' about which the enquiry is made is also the ego. As the result of the ego ceases to exist and only the Self is found to exist.” (Day by Day, 21-11-45)

Question: “What is ‘I’ the Self or the ego?”

Answer: “In the enquiry `Who am I?', `I' is the ego. The question really means, what is the source or origin of this ego? You need not have any *bhavana* [idea] in the mind. All that is required is, you must give up the *bhavana* that you are the body, of such and such a description, with such and such a name, etc. There is no need to have a *bhavana* about your real nature. It exists as it always does; it is real and no *bhavana*.” (Day by Day, 3-1-46)

“The enquiry ‘Who am I?' means really the enquiry within oneself as to wherefrom within the body the ‘I’-thought arises. If you concentrate your attention on such an enquiry, the ‘I’-thought being the root of all other thoughts, all thoughts will be destroyed and then the Self or the Big `I' alone will remain as ever. You do not get anything new, or reach somewhere where you were not before. When all other thoughts which were hiding the Self are removed, the Self shines by itself." (Day by Day, 24-11-46)

28/11/2007: ‘The Path of Sri Ramana’ by Sri Sadhu Om

The questioner who gave the link: *>If we argue conceptually and throw quotes at one another, we are no better than pandits and biblical scholars. All these words are just little black marks on a piece of paper/computer screen. Bhagavan warned against this. Words are on the outside. The Self is deep within. […]*

In opinion and direct experience from here, The Path of Sri Ramana by Sri Sadhu Om is a very, very great treasure. Just ask the heart to read it, and sift it for the truth.<

Please do not come on this site and lecture about *pandits*. Look at the number of posts on this site and you will see that your comment is self-evidently false. You got a simple response to the link you posted which contains inor-

dinate wordiness with little substance. The simple fact is that only mind requires *vichara*, only mind can perform *vichara*. If a writer claims otherwise he is a fool.

28/11/2007: 'The Path of Sri Ramana' by Sri Sadhu Om

>If Self Enquiry is a thought-process done by the mind [where mind = 'I am so and so', the ego-sense OR the false first person (poyyaana thanmai uNarvu) awareness], then this process of SE will be possible only when performed in isolation (when the attention is not on the worldly activities).

However, Sri Bhagavan (and consequently, devotees like Sri Sadhu Om et. al.) have mentioned on more than one occasion that a) Self Enquiry can be done anywhere at any time even while engaged in other (worldly) activities & b) the 'path' and the 'goal' are 'one and the same'. Multiple verses in Ulladu Narpadu delineate the process, however, as you can see, there is still confusion here...<

Self Enquiry can only be done by the mind. No other entity requires it. If this fundamental fact is not grasped, all is missed. Self Enquiry must become all-consuming and can be done at all times.

The simple fact is that only the mind requires *Vichara*, only mind can perform *Vichara*. If a writer claims otherwise, he is a fool.

As Chadwick said "This process has often been misunderstood, though actually Bhagavan's teaching is quite clear. In this search one is not to seek for some transcendental 'I-Absolute', but for the ego itself and the point where it arises. Find this, the ego automatically drops away and one then knows there is nothing but the Self. It is like following a stream to its source through the hills, and when one has reached that point whence it arises the stream itself will no longer exist. Source, mind, ego are one and the same and cannot exist apart from each other. The mind cannot know the Self, for how can it know that which is beyond mind?" (Sadhu Arunachala, p. 62-63)

The ideas of enlightenment and need for *Vichara* belong to ego alone. When ego searches within the foothills of its own existence and finds its source, it settles down exhausted, vanquished. At that point there is no longer any need for *Vichara*. Only wayward mind needs the map of *Vichara*. Self is ever self-aware of its whereabouts.

8/12/2007 The meaning of *svadharma*

>Does anyone here knows the exact meaning of svadharma? I found the following interpretations: one's one way, one's prescribed duties. Both seem to be different in the meaning.<

sva dharma – own duty or way; moral obligation

There is a little talk (Talk 227) which brushes against this particular issue.

The Master observed: "Being of the nature of Bliss why does one continue to crave for happiness? To be rid of that craving is itself salvation. The Scriptures say, `You are That'. The imparting of that knowledge is their purpose. The realisation must be by your finding out who you are and abiding as That, i.e. your Self. To be repeating, 'I am that' or 'not this' is only a waste of time. For the worthy disciple, the work lies within himself and not without."

As Bhagavan was descending the Hill, one of the workers, just outside the Asramam stopped work and was about to prostrate before the Master.

Then the Master said: "To engage in your duty is the true prostration."

The Master's attendant asked: "How?"

M.: "To perform one's duty carefully is the greatest service to God."

(Then, smiling, he entered the hall.)

and in Talk 268:

D.: "Is it morally right for a man to renounce his household duties when he once realises that his highest duty is *Atma-chintana* (continuous thought on the Self)?"

M.: "This desire to renounce things is the obstacle. The Self is simple renunciation. The Self has renounced all."

D.: "It is true from Bhagavan's standpoint. But for us ... my work demands the best part of my time and energy; often I am too tired to devote myself to *Atma-chintana*."

M.: "The feeling 'I work' is the hindrance. Enquire, 'Who works?' Remember, 'Who am I?' The work will not bind you. It will go on automatically. Make no effort either to work or to renounce work. Your effort is the bond-

age. What is bound to happen will happen. If you are destined to cease working, work cannot be had even if you hunt for it. If you are destined to work you cannot leave it; you will be forced to engage in it. So leave it to the Higher Power. You cannot renounce or hold as you choose. If one takes to the real duty of man (Self-enquiry) all duties are resolved appropriately."

19/12/2007

>Advanced practisers (sadhakas) and thinkers may laugh at this and say: "Why do you need a mantra while the Ocean of Bliss is there to be immersed into directly?"

Well, from another point of view the devotion to one's mantra IS DIRECT IMMERSING into the ocean of bliss, isn't it?<

Indeed!

Your comment reminded me of the Ramakrishna/Naren story. Fortunately I found it on the net and saved searching upstairs for it in Vivekananda's Complete Works.

"Another day the thought of excessive spiritual fervour frightened Naren. The Master reassured him by saying: 'God is like an ocean of sweetness; wouldn't you dive into it? Suppose there is a bowl filled with syrup, and you are a fly, hungry for the sweet liquid. How would you like to drink it?' Narendra said that he would sit on the edge of the bowl, otherwise he might be drowned in the syrup and lose his life. 'But,' the Master said, 'you must not forget that I am talking of the Ocean of *Satchidananda*, the Ocean of Immortality. Here one need not be afraid of death. Only fools say that one should not have too much of divine ecstasy. Can anybody carry to excess the love of God? You must dive deep in the Ocean of God.'"

(http://www.ramakrishnavivekananda.info/vivekananda_biography/04_training.htm)

29/12/2007: The 'I'-feeling

>I think I have an idea what the 'I'-feeling that Ramana talked about is but I would like to know from other members what they think the 'I'-feeling is. I think practicing Ramana's method of Vichara is just staying with the 'I'-

feeling. The reason I've posted to the group is to verify whether others think the same thing. If they have their own interpretation I should like to hear what it is.<

There are various references to 'I'-ness/'I'-feeling/'I'-sense, for example,

"Is not the sense of 'I' natural to all beings, expressed in all their feelings as 'I came', 'I went', 'I did', or 'I was'? On questioning what this is, we find that the body is identified with 'I' because movements and similar functions pertain to the body. Can the body then be this 'I'-consciousness? It was not there before birth, it is composed of the five elements, it is absent in sleep, and it (eventually) becomes a corpse. No, it cannot be. This sense of 'I', which arises in the body for the time being, is otherwise called the ego, ignorance, illusion, impurity, or individual self. The purpose of all the scriptures is this enquiry (into the Self). It is declared in them that the annihilation of the ego-sense is Liberation." (from Self Enquiry Essay available in 'Words of Grace', p. 3)

"It is the ineradicable ego, the 'I-ness' in each of us, which is responsible for the perpetuation of this maya with all its attendant sufferings and disenchantments. ... So all that you have to do is to get to this I, the real I behind your seeming I, for then you are rid forever of the illusive 'I'-ness and all is attained, since you stay thenceforward at one with That which is you; that's all." (Surpassing Love and Grace, p. 218)

From Talk 54: "If the present 'I'-ness vanishes, the discovery is complete. What remains over is the pure Self."

From [Nagamma] Letter 83: "Bhagavan has written in his Unnadhi Nalupadhi, verse 14: 'If it is said that there is the first person 'I' then there are the second and third persons 'you' and 'he'. When the real nature of the first person is known and the 'I' feeling disappears, the 'you' and the 'he' disappear simultaneously, and that which shines as the only One becomes the natural state of the ultimate reality."

>Although at the relative level we may name this a 'feeling' (the 'I'-feeling) there is a risk of pursuing a 'state' of mind (that will always be within ignorance and duality anyway) rather than the dissolution of the relative mind, or ego-sense, and the 'experience' of non-dual consciousness WITHOUT any 'experiencer'. According to this view I would always prefer to speak

about the 'I'-thought than the 'I'-feeling, since the 'I'-thought is the 'root' of the 'I'-feeling (from my understanding point of view).<

Indeed. It is commonplace to erroneously pursue a state of mind, in the name of *Vichara*. There seems to be a fundamental misconception that ego-I can watch 'I am I' ('I-I') and that this is *Vichara*. Not only is this not *Vichara*, it is also impossible. The Quest demands only that the source of ego (i.e. the 'I'-thought) be held in readiness for eviction. Ego goes no further.

With regard to this ego removal, there is an interesting passage in Sri Sarma's 'Maha Yoga': "The Self is the pure 'I AM', the only thing that is self-manifest; by Its light all the world is lighted up. But It seems to be unknown, and to need to be known, because It is obscured by the world and the ego. What is needed is to remove these. The Sage explains this by the analogy of a room that is encumbered with unwanted lumber. If space be wanted, all that is needful is to clear out the lumber; no space has to be brought in from outside. So too, the ego-mind and its creations have to be emptied out, and then the Self alone would remain, shining without hindrance. What is loosely called 'knowing the Self' is really being egoless, and the Self. Thus the Sage does not know the Self; he is the Self."

2/1/2008

>Regarding human authors you are right – but not regarding divine authors. How could there be any "authorship" regarding someone who declares (like Sri Shankara and Sri Ramana): "I am not this body"?

Talk 281

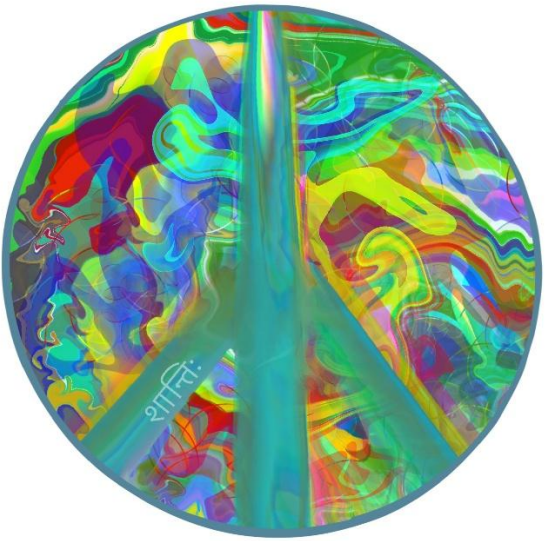
Question: "Why do you not sign your name?"

Maharshi: "[...] Moreover, by what name am I to be known? I myself do not know. People have given me several names from time to time since my arrival here. If I should sign by one name, all would not understand it. So I used to say to the people seeking autographs that, even if they should show my signature, people in general would not believe it to be true."<

I had hoped that this argumentative strain would stop. It appears it was a false hope. Too many half baked ideas around pretending to be enlightened.

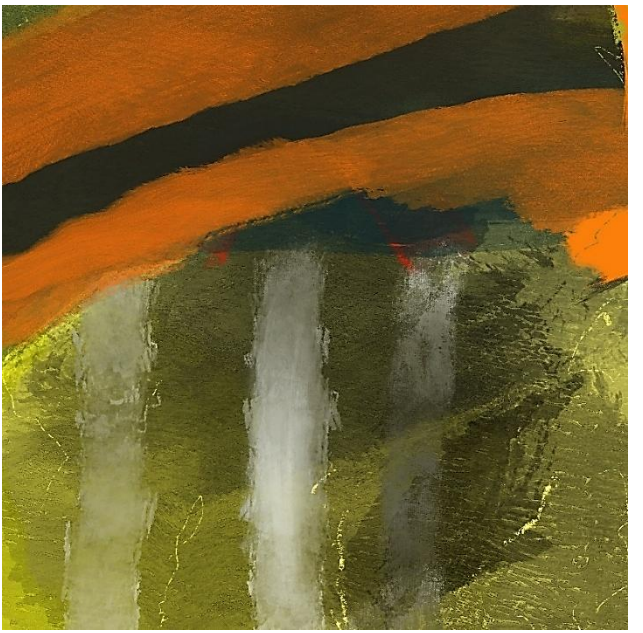
I have neither the health nor the will to continue moderating this nonsense and it seems clear that the rest of the group seems unmoved to say anything. It may be that they believe the pseudo-advaita nonsense to be correct. I should add that the quote given by […] to back up his claim is self-evidently spurious. Bhagavan did not sign his name because he had been given so many names. He says it himself. It gave him an out so that he would not be bothered by the requests in the future. I realise that there is a trend towards looking to the absurd for explanations rather than common sense these days but the will is not there to be bothered with the ludicrous nature of it.

[That was the end of the Yahoo groups. His was his last contribution there.]



Shanti - peace

Friday Chatroom



Haven

[For some time, there was in the Ramana Maharshi group a chat room every Friday at 5 pm to exchange ideas. Parts of it were transcribed by hand, as it was possible.]

21/1/2005

When one truly concentrates on the Heart, ego merges in its source.

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By means of *vichara sphurana* is experienced. The first is practice the latter grace. When *sphurana* is experienced, the pull is irresistible, and then there can be no doubt.

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Both, *advaita* and *dvaita*, are locked into time and space.

***

This same drawing can be experienced by one and all without ever going to the physical Arunachala. The story of Bhagavan and Arunachala is a physical enactment of the path of *vichara*.

***

Ramana's teaching is very simple, and it tallies with Jesus and Buddha. "Know thyself". All else is mere mindstuff to remove mindstuff, or a thorn to remove a thorn.

***

W.: "I read in the emails about Muruganar's advice about plunging into Self-Enquiry. What is your view if I say that I am waiting for the right time to do that? May I say for self enquiry, 'Here and now', no time should be lost?"

Miles: "Who is waiting? The right time is now. Do not be fooled by those who say there is a right time in the future according to fate etc. Fate has nothing to do with it. That pertains to body/mind alone. […]

The search within is every bit the red herring as the search without. […] Within/without – why such designation? Even that which you look out on is in the mind alone. […]

Indeed, *vichara* is the key. If the search remains mere hollow words and concepts, there is no search. […]

The one who would look out for it is the one who causes mischief. The 'looker' is the one to enquiry into. […] To reach 'I', search and find 'I'. The 'I' who does the looking is the 'I' to be enquired into. All else is mere polemics."

R.: "If I may ask, does *prarabdha karma* determine every action (even mundane) in the present life, or is it more relevant to the conditioning of the mind and not actions necessarily?"

Miles: "*Prarabdha* is simple that part of one's *karma* which is to be worked out in this life. It really is of no concern to one who takes to *vichara*. Identifying with the actions is the problem. *Vichara* is the solution. Bhagavan said, 'All the activities that the body is to go through are determined when it first comes into existence. It does not rest with you to accept or reject

them. The only freedom you have is to turn your mind inward and renounce activities there.' […]

I should add in the light of previous conversations today, that turning inward is stopping the travelling, attaching mind. The mind that travels in is in every bit as problematic as the mind that travels out."

R.: "Can you please explain the issues with the mind travelling inside? Wouldn't that mean that the mind would be led to the self during the process or am I wrong here?"

Miles: "If the Self is seen as an object, it doesn't matter where you put it – it will always evade you. One does not travel to the Self. One is always That. It is the source of the mind that needs to be sought. If one sees the Self as something to be travelled to, it will be like trying to step on the head of one's shadow as one walks towards it. Whether the mind puts the direction as within or without makes no difference; it is still mindstuff."

J.: "A Ramesh idea."[1]

M.: "Can *Prarabdha* be said to influence both subtle body (mind) and gross body, thereby determining if one will do *vichara* in this life or not?"

Miles: "The important thing to do is to find out who thinks this way. No. *Vichara* is not determined by *karma* at all. To say so is to deny Grace. J., Ramesh needs this idea to bolster his theory that one can do nothing.

The truth is that there is one '*kriya'* [deed] which is eternally beyond *karma*. […]

Prarabdha is fictitious and only exists as long as the individual believes it so. *Vichara* is the ultimate *kriya* which slices through all such things. For it there is no karmic barrier."

25/3/2005: Good Friday

G.: "Here it is 'Good Friday' – the *'mahasamadhi'* day of Bhagavan Jesus.

[1] Ramesh Balsekar

The anguish of death was with Jesus on His final day – the anguish of death was for Bhagavan Ramana the entrance to his final State. It is told from both that it was very strong. Bhagavan did not suffer this anymore when it came for him to die. He was eternally free from it, but not yet Jesus. How is this to be understood? It just came to mind. Perhaps it is not important at all. I don't know."

Miles: „The mind wants to make consistent and logical patterns and paradigms within by which it can box itself and its patterns. Both Jesus and Bhagavan suffered physically, albeit Jesus suffered tremendous violence. From such violence only compassion remained.

But then events are only from the point of view of the observer. It is the observer that both Jesus and Ramana, would have us attend to."

D.: "Yes, that's true."

Miles.: "The lives of the great Sages are there not to copy, but rather to inspire. Both Jesus and Ramana are eternally free... but so are we all!"

D.: "They set an example that pain and suffering don't affect the Self."

Miles: "The appearance of difference is just that… 'appearance'. Indeed suffering is a powerful tool. This inspired the Buddha too. But ultimately they show that the Self can neither be wetted nor cut nor burnt nor killed."

G.: "This is the meaning of Easter."

Miles: "Indeed. Bhagavan's symbolic interpretation of Easter is wonderful. I can't remember the Talk number today.

G.: "Talk 396."

Miles: "Yes, that is the one. 'Give up your life if you would truly live'. Sorry that is a paraphrase.

G.: "Give up this life if thou wouldst live."

Miles: "Indeed! This is very important. And in order to prepare for this and allow it at any moment *vichara* is the practice. If *vichara* becomes like second nature, then miracles can happen… believe you me!"

1/4/2005: The witness

D.: “Is there any separateness between the observer and the object that is observed? Who is watching what?”

G.: “That would be meditation on an object – but *vichara* is not such like.”

Miles: “Bhagavan explained that the concept of witness was often misunderstood. He said that the word *sakshi* (watching) must be understood as ‘presence’, like the sun, which, although it must be present for all activities, takes part in none. Otherwise ‘witness’ is a dualistic term. And when misunderstanding, we get all sorts of things, watch all sorts of things.”

15/4/2005: Heart and *sphurana*

[The conversation was on the word “cave” in verses 19 f. from Ramana’s Supplements to 40 verses (Ulladu Narpadu):

19. Its mouth is closed. Within its cavity is seated a heavy darkness, filled with all desires; all the great nerves are centred there; the home it is of breath, mind, light of knowledge.

20. The Lord whose home is the interior of the Heart-Lotus is extolled as Lord of the Cave. If by force of practice the feeling ‘I am He, I am the Lord of the Cave’ becomes firmly established, as firmly as your present notion that you are the ego is established in the body, and thus you stand forth as that Lord of the Cave, the illusion that you are the perishable body will vanish like darkness before the rising sun.]

Miles: “The word for cave – ‘*guha’* – is of course also a synonym for the Heart. The darkness or *tamas* mentioned in the verse (19) simply refers to the propensity for manifestation of the gross phenomena of body etc. […]

Ramana describes *sphurana* as the Self and advises fixing attention on it in enquiry. […] If one becomes transfixed by it, there is no effort in the enquiry and spontaneous *vichara* ensues. As long as there is a body one stands at the threshold. […] *Sphurana* only appears intermittent as long as the mind is filled with stuff. In reality it is none other than the Self and therefore eternal.”

G.: “So *sphurana* is the eternal speech, and mindstuff interrupts it.”

Miles: "That's it. […] Ramana is very clear about the use of this word. He uses it to describe the sensation which emanates from the Heart. […] *Sphurana* is the natural climax to *vichara*. […] Bhagavan is clear that *hrdaya* (Heart) and *sphurana* are non-different. The pure, *sattvic* mind is enthralled by the Self alone. It cannot go elsewhere and even if it could, where is the will to do so. This is *vichara* and *bhakti*.

29/4/2005: Talking about *sadhana*

G.: "It is difficult to speak about such themes [i.e. *sadhana*, practice]. Perhaps it is better just to practice without speaking about it and without anyone knowing about it at all."

Miles: "That was certainly the practice here."

C.: "I don't agree."

Miles: "There is a difference between talking about Ramana and his teaching and sharing *sadhana*. The latter has always been problematic and recorded as such in the *Upanishads*."

C.: "But even he [Ramana] shared *sadhana* and so did many of his devotees. It is up to everyone, of course."

Miles: "Bhagavan responded from the position of knowledge. If we can find a *jnani* then of course *sadhana* can be discussed. If not, then all we have is hearsay. To discuss Ramana's talks on *sadhana* and his response is of course very useful. To say 'I think that…' is of no use at all. Unfortunately, 'I think that…' is now the prevalent discussion. The whole point of Bhagavan's teaching is to eradicate such folly. Then again it matters little. No one really listens. Everyone wants to talk. And inevitably that results in talking the talk but never 'really' walking the walk."

12/5/2005

M.: "When I do enquiry many times my attention is diverted towards my breath and I end up watching my breath."

Miles: "The one who watches always remains to be enquired into. Sometimes this is an ongoing yet intermittent practice. It does not really matter when one realises that there is still one who claims the watching etc. Then

one simply enquires again. […] The distractions can become a great blessing because they bring remembrance in their wake."

M.: "But many a times it reminds me of my miserable state where I have not even tasted the process of Self Inquiry yet. […] I feel an exasperation."

Miles: "Indeed, this is common. […] Unfortunately, as long as we play into time's hands, we will have a problem. […] There is a power and that power never wanes. It is the sole constant. That power reminds one eventually to enquiry. […] The pull is incessant, but the human condition causes one not to notice except intermittently. This is the aim of *vichara*, to get rid of this intermittent barrier of the incessant pull."

20.5.2005 *Vichara* is an ordinary thing

G.: "Yesterday I came across your message on your page that self-enquiry is just an ordinary thing."

Miles: "Oh yes."

G.: "Nothing miraculous."

Miles: "Indeed."

G.: "The miraculous is a game the mind plays. What do you mean by miraculous?"

Miles: "It depends on how you understand the word."

G.: "In the sense of wonderful."

Miles: "Ok. Wonderful is a thing of the mind. Enquiry is completely natural. It is neither wonderful nor not wonderful. It is only the mind which measures in such a way. As long as we look for something wonderful, we look in the wrong direction, I suppose."

G.: "It leads to happiness, a happiness which can't be destroyed anymore. We are looking for happiness anyway."

Miles: "Indeed. But is this the happiness of the body? Happiness is our true nature. But we must be careful how and where to seek it. So this happiness is not wonderful either. It is beyond such conjecture. In fact to posit wonder

on anything and to anticipate it at some time in the future is to negate happiness now."

G.: "Yes, that's understood. I have done such things in large measure."

Miles: "Everyone does. It is the human condition. The good is not far off."

G.: "So this leads back to *atma vichara*."

Miles: "Understanding that is a large part of the battle."

[…]

Miles: "*Vichara* and surrender are really one and the same, and until the mind stops creating a world of habits, so long success will seem far off."

M.: "But aren't there stages of surrender?"

Miles: "No."

M.: "Meaning for the common man, who believes in his convictions that he and god are separate."

Miles: "Stages are mentioned when people won't a simple practice. They are like a concession […], but you are never away from your 'core'. It is only words that make a division.

Surrender is an either/ or thing, i.e. either it is or it is not. If there is surrender, there can be no question about one's condition or status in life. […] If one still queries one's plight, then there is no surrender, there is (absolutely) no level of surrender."

5/8/2005: *Hrdaya* (the spiritual heart)

J.: "Miles, I have been meaning to ask you the other day about interpreting *hrdayam*. Once you also broke the word another way."

Miles: "hRdaya – holding, giving, enquiring

hR – holding

da – bestow, indicate, destroy

ya – enquiry

That which you already hold, that which is indicated, is revealed through enquiry.

That 'I' which you hold dear is destroyed by means of enquiry. The 'I' that one holds dear is of course the ego."

J.: "But who holds the ego dear?"

Miles: "That is the big puzzle! It always reverts to this! The meaning above leads directly to *hrdaya* – the Heart."

13.11.2005: A chat on silence and speech

J.: " Silence is eternal Speech."

Miles: "Is Silence eternal Speech or the Speech of the Eternal?"

J.: "Silence is Eternal Speech. I feel I understand it very well, deep inside, yet not logically."

Miles: "In terms of *'vyakarna'* [analysis of language] the ancient grammarians held that Silence is the form which speech follows."

J.: "OK, I understand that speech falls away from it, in the way that waves flow or fall away from the ocean."

Miles: "That which is the speech of the Eternal cannot fail; it is *'pasyanti'* (the eternal shining one) that is the Silent core of every speaker."

J.: "I only sort of get it ..."

Miles: "Speech comes from 'nowhere' forms and is then spouted forth in gross form... that Silent space remains unchanged... also the hearer understands speech by the light of *'pasyanti'*. Speech comes from and returns to exactly the same Silent space."

J.: "Yes I think the understanding is dawning now."

Miles: "Speech comes from nowhere (or looks like it does); it forms (from the formless) and then is spouted forth. The threefold speech is often referred to and largely ignored by commentators.

pasyanti > *madhyama* > *vaikhari,* formless > forming > formed

When the threefold speech is traced, it is in effect *vichara*.

Various Topics

That which makes the Enquiry is the Ego

“...when the Self is realised this goes on without any effort and what was the means becomes the goal." (Day by Day, 6-6-46)

Paying attention is a process. A process which implies a frame of mind. We learn about and develop the ability to pay attention as we grow up. The practice of vichara is utilising this ability to pay attention in order to achieve a particular frame of mind. This is a temporary frame of mind during which "I" am paying attention. I am doing *vichara*. This frame of mind, this practice of vichara, is a part of one's own umwelt, one's individual world. Paying attention takes effort.

"...you must concentrate to see where the I-thought arises. Instead of looking outwards, look inwards and see where the I-thought arises.” (Day by Day, 3-7-46)

Whether outwards or inwards, paying attention takes effort. This effort is subjective. It is performed by me. It is a part of 'my' umwelt.

Dr. Srinivasa Rao asked Bhagavan, “When we enquire within ‘who am I?’ what is that?”

Bhagavan: “It is the ego. It is only that which makes the *vichara* also. **The Self has no *vichara***. That which makes the enquiry is the ego. The ‘I’ about which the enquiry is made is also the ego. As the result of the enquiry the ego ceases to exist and only the Self is found to exist.” (Day by Day, 21-11-45)

“When once you have found what you seek, *vichara* (enquiry) also ceases and you rest in it.“ (Talk 186)

“*Vichara* is the process and the goal also. ‘I AM’ is the goal and the final Reality. To hold to it with effort is *vichara*. When spontaneous and natural it is Realisation.“ (Talk 390)

Thereafter paying attention remains a process. When needed it arises. When it is not needed, *vichara* (as goal) automatically, without effort, re-asserts.

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The "I" refers to ego.

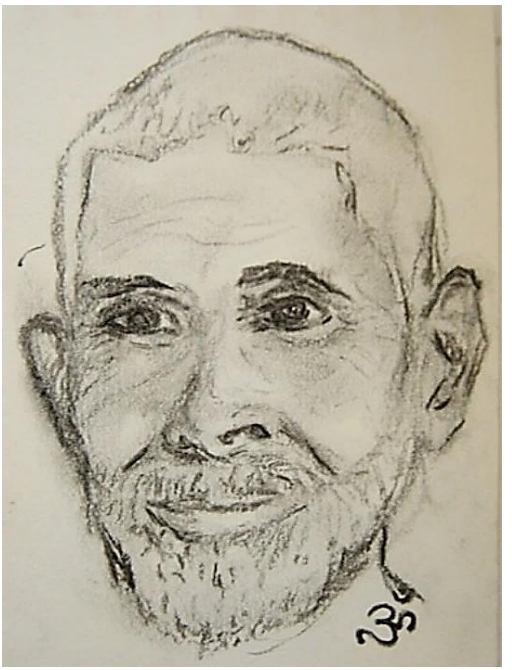
S. S. Cohen makes an excellent point in his book, ‘Advaitic Sadhana’, when he remarks that many people take to *dhyana* with "inadequate knowledge, with hazy, improperly formed ideas about the aim and object of their meditation, which naturally results in their remaining in the cloud of uncertainty for a long time. The vast majority of beginners are in too great a haste to take to the road of *dhyana* before seizing themselves of all its facts and principles." (Chapter 3, second paragraph)

In respect of *vichara* we face a similar problem. In the basic question "who am I?" just who is it that is referred to by the term "I"? Many people suppose it to refer to a 'greater' Self and thus fail in their quest. The "I" refers to ego. This is fundamental to the practice of *vichara* and should be understood right from the outset.

There is absolutely no need to enquire into the Self, the Self is ever aware, but there is every need to enquire into the ego-self. The ‘one who is watch-

ing' is indeed the upstart who needs attention. Bhagavan is very clear that in the enquiry, 'I' refers to the ego.

Ramana’s Teaching is Clear



Yesterday, a friend forwarded a somewhat naive proclamation which he had stumbled over on his web travels. It is a proclamation by a modern-day writer on Ramana Maharshi's teaching. In it, the writer states that, Ramana Maharshi's teaching was ill understood by most writers in English, during Ramana's own lifetime. Needless to say, this is an absurdly misleading statement on a variety of counts! I find it hard to believe that any writer could have the audacity to make such a claim. In my experience, the early books, even those which were not published by the Ashram, were pretty much clear, the muddied puddles of writing seem, in the main, to have fallen after Sri Ramana's Mahasamadhi. However the real agenda seems to be forthcoming on the same page – a thinly veiled allusion to the effect that that particular writer has a direct line of contact to Ramana Maharshi.

That the teaching was, and is, misunderstood (also mentioned by Chadwick below) is surely more about ego's indiscriminate, insistent search for unnecessary complication and the non-existent esoteric level. Books, explaining

the teaching, were, and are, available. There is no need to fall for any writer's specious PR.

In his book, ‘A Sadhu's Reminiscences of Ramana Maharshi’ (p. 15), Major Chadwick counters the ludicrous idea, that Ramana's teaching is unclear, rather beautifully. Bear in mind that Chadwick first visited the Ashram on 1st November 1935, decided there and then "here is my Guru," and moved there permanently soon after. He had ample time to listen, discuss and practice the teaching, under the watchful eye of Bhagavan himself.

"After I had been here a day or two Bhagavan asked somebody to give me a copy of Who am I? and told me to read it. Here is contained the essence of his teaching, though given by him as a youth of only 21 it never needed to be changed. Bhagavan might talk all sorts of philosophy and explain systems in answer to questions, but his teaching and instruction for *Sadhana* was all contained in Who am I? Everything else, as far as he was concerned, was padding or expansion for those who were not satisfied with the simplicity and straightforward explanation of this little book. He had always insisted that the book should be sold so cheaply that it was available to the poorest and originally it cost no more than half an *anna*.

This wonderful little book comprises one of the first set of instructions given by Bhagavan in about I902 in writing as he was not speaking at the time. They are direct from his own experience and in no way influenced by his reading of various *Upanishads* and other sacred writings which were afterwards brought to him to explain. Later reading these books, he realized the philosophic import of what had happened to him and so was able to coordinate his experiences and fit them into the Hindu tradition. But in this book we have his teachings at first hand and uncoloured. Here we find their very essence and by the help of this single brochure can learn all that is necessary. No more is needed."

Regarding Self enquiry Chadwick explains, "that everything is in the mind and that the mind itself is only a passing phenomenon was continually stressed by Bhagavan. ‘Who is the one behind the mind?’ he would ask repeatedly. ‘Find that one and the mind itself will automatically disappear.’ To do this one must repeatedly seek out the source of the ‘I’ by the enquiry ‘Who am I?’.

This process has often been misunderstood, though actually Bhagavan's teaching is quite clear. In this search one is not to seek for some transcendental 'I-Absolute', but for the ego itself and the point where it arises. Find this, the ego automatically drops away and one then knows there is nothing but the Self. It is like following a stream to its source through the hills, and when one has reached that point whence it arises the stream itself will no longer exist. Source, mind, ego are one and the same and cannot exist apart from each other. The mind cannot know the Self, for how can it know that which is beyond mind? So it is impossible even for a *Jnani* to explain his state in words, which is only of the mind. To know it is to be it. There is no other way." (p. 59)

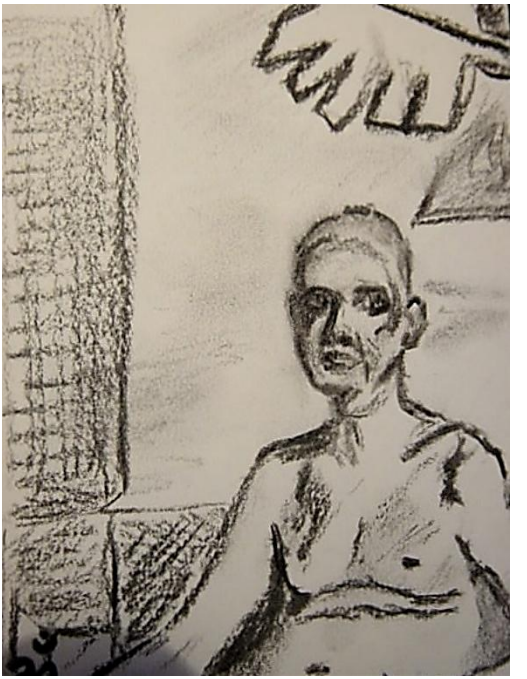
They come to undermine this teaching

Blandness appears to have overcome sections of the Ramana community – a blandness bordering on indifference. In the past few weeks, I have had the proverb "live and let live" thrown at me from various quarters. While this is undoubtedly an admirable way to go through life (and one that I agree with wholeheartedly) – i.e. to tolerate the opinions of others and for them to tolerate your opinions – it does not mean that one should not point out simple errors in understanding, especially if such simple errors can be referenced. It seems that the traditional use of *pramANa* (proof) has been abandoned in favour of indiscriminate eclecticism. Without adhering to tradition, and the *Sishtas* who transmit it, there is a danger of 'falling' (*apabhramSa*) into an ego-oriented invention which is then set up as spiritual truth. Surrendering to the word of those great seers who have gone before limits the ego's potential for doing harm.

There are numerous groups growing up around the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Groups which, while happy to use the name of the sage, are unwilling (whether through ignorance or obstinacy) to explore his teaching accurately. Groups which, while happy to announce allegiance to Bhagavan, are not happy to correct their members, nor even encourage helpful dialogue, when ideas, devoid of *pramANa*, or flying in the face of it, obliterate the essence of the teaching.

Sri Ramakrishna says, "There are three types of physicians – superior, mediocre and inferior. The physician who comes, feels the patient's pulse and

then says to him, 'Brother, please take the medicine,' and leaves, he is an inferior type of physician. He doesn't care to find out if the patient has taken the medicine. The physician who persuades the patient in many ways to take the medicine, who says in a sweet voice, 'O brother, how can you be cured unless you take the medicine? Dear brother, please take it. See I myself mix it for you. Now take it,' is a mediocre physician. And the physician who sees that the patient is stubbornly refusing to take the medicine, puts his knee on the patient's chest and forces the medicine down his throat is the superior type of physician. This is the *tamoguna* of the physician. This quality does good to the patient, it does not harm him.



Ramana with fan

Like the physicians *acharyas* (religious teachers) are also of three types. Those who instruct their disciples on spiritual matters and then make no inquiries about their progress are inferior *acharyas*. Those who repeat their teachings again and again for the good of their disciples so that they may internalize the instructions, make requests in various ways and show love

are mediocre acharyas. And the type of *acharyas* who use force when they find that the disciples do not listen in any way, them I call superior *acharyas*." (from Gospel of Ramakrishna by Mahendranath Gupta)

Major Chadwick reveals, "I once saw Bhagavan appear really angry, the atmosphere in the Hall was electric; one felt afraid. The occasion was the visit to the town of a popular Swamy who initiated all and sundry, in fact anybody who came to him, without any sort of preparation. He taught them a form of breath control which proved very dangerous to those who practised it without observing certain necessary restrictions. He was quite the fashion for a short time ... Two of this Swamy's disciples came to the Hall one evening just before the meal. They asked Bhagavan some questions which he readily answered, but they would accept none of his answers and tried repeatedly to put him in the wrong. Bhagavan was very patient with them and tried for long time to put them right; but at last their impertinence became such that Bhagavan flared up and went for them in a frightening way, but they were so hardened that it seemed to have but little effect. They were eventually ejected from the Hall forcibly and driven from the Ashram, Bhagavan remarking that "they came here to try and undermine this teaching." (from "A Sadhu's Reminiscences" p. 65-66)

It is time Bhagavan's devotees took notice of those who perpetrate nonsense in his name and "undermine this teaching" lest they themselves become guilty of the same. They too should be "very patient with them" and try "for long time to put them right". Only then can they truly call themselves Ramana devotees. The model devotee, who set the benchmark in such things, is Sri K. Lakshmana Sarma. So intent was he on giving a faithful rendering of Bhagavan's teaching that he "was blessed with the opportunity of receiving long and pertinent instructions" from Bhagavan, himself (cf. Maha Yoga). For those truly interested, there are plenty of books available from Sri Ramanasramam that can be referred to for "*pramANa*".

The Age of Shortcuts

There is a telling paragraph at the beginning of Chapter One of S. S. Cohen's 'Advaitic Sadhana: The Yoga of Direct Liberation':

"This is the age of shortcuts. Time has shrunk and space more so, and the dual inconvenience has affected men's moods and temper. Even the supreme

knowledge has nowadays to be given in massive doses and has to produce quick results too, or they will have none of it."

Telling because it reveals that there was a deep-seated impatience even back in the days when westerners used to flock to the Ashram on short visits to "bask" in the presence of Sri Ramana Maharshi. This essay was drafted during Ramana Maharshi's lifetime, although first published in 1975. If there was an impatience then what must one say of today!

In his introduction to the book Cohen says that, "he used to watch their comings and goings and the haste with which most of them expected to pluck the plum of Self-realisation, immediate apprehension of the Reality, before even grasping the elementary principles of the Master's teaching or the Vedantic truth."

This is an age where people would rather watch celebrity chefs cooking on TV, go to their demonstrations, or buy the celebrity books and let them gather dust on a shelf [after a brief perusal, of course], rather than actually practice the art of cooking themselves.

Ramana Devotees are more about Ego than *Vichara*

It seems Ramana devotees are more about ego these days than *vichara*. It's all about what I can do in the name of Ramana [all the while pleading for Grace from Ramana] rather than "who claims to do these things in the name of Ramana?" It's not a new phenomenon. It just seems to have become more and more prevalent as more and more people use the internet as a quick and easy way to ego-self-aggrandisement. Of course, I hear you protest, "that's not me!" ...No – it's never 'me' - I always have a good reason for the things that I do. That is the paradox.

The idea that "I" do this or that in the name of Ramana or any other religious icon is absurd for the *vicharin*. The only real worth it has is as fodder for *vichara*. If you do something, be honest, with yourself, and others. You do it for yourself or perhaps for other devotees. You do it for kudos. You do not do it for the appointed icon. Said icon is normally dead and had little or no use for your actions in life let alone death. Honesty, in action, is an important part of *vichara*. If you are moved to *vichara* the do-er, while doing an action, all is well and good.

Meme
Richard Dawkins coined the term "meme".
It is "a unit of cultural transmission". i.e. ideas, fashion, tunes, "awareness watching awareness", ways of making things, etc.
It's just the way ideas spread.

With regard to the one who is focussed on *vichara* or rather thinks this to be the case, that one is a real rascal. If the *vicharin* expects a reward, for being focussed, s/he is an ass. The idea of being focussed on *vichara* should be mere fodder for *vichara*. The ego that comes up with all these ideas is an impostor. The ego that revels in its focus or congratulates itself for all the Ramana deeds is just like a hammer in one's hand congratulating itself for having good aim and adequate force.

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Ego seeks the complicated – without complications it has nothing to do; without complications it is snookered. It needs to have things to discuss; things to interpret; things to write about; people to impress; sickly sweet vomit to share.

But what the hell do I know about it!

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Self-forgetfulness is one thing - the natural state quite another. The latter is constant. With practice *vichara* can go on at all times even in sleep. It is true that absolute absorption in work appears to negate the idea "I work" but as soon as one has finished or if one pauses "I did that", "I'll now do this" re-appears and *vichara* can be remembered. The *vicharin's* ultimate aim must be constant (or near constant) *vichara*. It does not interrupt work but rather focusses it. One must also remember that self-forgetfulness is not always good for work sometimes it results in absent-mindedness (*laya*) and carelessness. There is a difference between self-forgetfulness and concentration. Concentration is appropriately directed. When ego performs thus where is the problem!

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As the door closes on humanity,
acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 2010

People are not really interested in *vichara*. That is very clear. They would rather live with their fantasies about this life, that life and the after life which is fine rather than engage with truth.

There is only one *vichara*. Not many viewpoints. The other things are practices which **at best** lead one to *vichara*, at worst lead on a wild goose chase. It is a strange thing indeed that so many are unwilling to engage with this simple fact. Awareness is a state which one is. It shines unaided when ego is not. It is not a thing which one 'experiences'. When the Sages talk of 'awareness of Self', they are talking about that natural state which is innate. 'awareness of Self' means 'Self's innate awareness', not that one should become *aware of Self*. Who is to be aware of what? It is all crazy.

Some listen, some do not. We hear what we want to hear. We also forget to check what was said (and translated) during Maharshi's lifetime. All the English translations were seen by him. His English was good. We should not fool ourselves into believing that he was not interested in what went on around him. He was not averse to 'losing his temper' and scolding those who did not heed his advice.

It seems everyone has set themselves up as an expert but no one realises this is counter to *vichara*. What can one say! The bitter fruits continue to be the favoured ones. The sweet fruit of practice is thrown aside. No one is interested in truth because uncontrolled ego finds it most distasteful. In truth, most Ramana devotees care nothing for real *vichara*. They talk about it a lot, but seldom do the necessary and allow it to soak into their very being.

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For many Ramana folks it is an **ideal** that they worship - an ideal Ramana. They have Ramana on a pedestal and miss the **wonder of his ordinariness**. They miss the human side and posit something supra-normal. That is not how I see him nor have I ever seen him that way. If I had done, *vichara* would have been of no use at all. It would have been clouded by mindstuff. I fell out with the church at a very young age because Jesus was similarly treated. It made/makes no sense. Jesus was angry at times, Ramana similarly so but for some reason present day devotees ignore this. It was never a nasty anger but a positive one that moved things forward. Ramana was not averse to correcting errors in his teaching and yet present day devotees are happy to allow them. It makes no sense. Ramana never allowed money to be collected in his name and yet now it is becoming the norm. The *Jnani* will never go out preaching for money. He does not lecture but he does respond to gen-

uine questions and participate in active dialogue. The modern trend is for static speeches and stereotypical '*satsangs*.' Why dress up and pretend to be 'holy.' The *Jnani* is natural. His expression is natural. He cannot be fathomed.

Everyone wants to make Ramana a product but I feel that anyone who tries has and will fail to understand his life and teaching.

I came to the conclusion recently that *advaita* is little understood by some modern *sadhakas*. They do not take the time to learn but merely quote misunderstood texts. *Advaita* is a doctrine which relies on *dvaita* for its existence. Without *dvaita* it means nothing. For some reason people cannot grasp that neither *dvaita* nor *advaita* theory is important to the practice of *vichara*. Strange. Such theory can be interesting but is not particularly important. The only theory which is truly useful is that which is found at the beginning of 'Who am I?' but once digested it no longer holds any importance to practice. *Vichara* is the action (*kriya*) which leads to non-action.

Vichara should remain as it is without the silly interpretations. When the interpretations appear and they are called *'vichara'* one need only point to the instruction in 'Who am I?' to show what Ramana Maharshi actually taught. Different paths for different folks but still one should not hop from one to the other as it is counter productive. When walking through the woods it is simpler to stick to well worn paths. Once one knows the environment well only then is it possible to walk without a path.

One of the primary reasons I have withdrawn from RM stuff is the rise of nonsense and superstition. Instead of investigating the source of such superstition people relish it. This is not healthy. For many years I avoided outright denial of some of the religious myths and superstitions as I felt sure that gradually people would begin to understand for themselves. In practice, the opposite seems to happen. As the years go by more and more nonsense seems to be encouraged. Poor Ramana is on his way to being a fully fledged divinity. If only folks could see the wonder of his value as a human being! It happened to Buddha. It happened to Jesus. Now it is Ramana's turn. Never mind. Many who used to keep in touch no longer do so. Perhaps they became dismayed that their crutches of superstition were kicked away so easily.

Indeed, it started during his lifetime. At times he tried to prevent, at others he gave in. The term ‘bhagavat (bhagavan)’ simply means 'fortunate, happy, venerable'. It is used as a term of address for saints, sages, wise folks, old folks, and those of good character. I suppose an English equivalent might be ‘Honorable’.

It seems to be that the modern way is to ignore what he said about the primary technique of *vichara*. Instead fantasies about god, heaven, miracles, etc. are preferred. He was very clear that all talk of god, gods etc. was mere mindstuff. However that is a difficult obsession to shed and in its wake all sorts of atrocity are prone to follow. They are fun concepts (heaven and hell, god and gods) when used in fiction.

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The Ch'an tradition was full of holy fools too. I do enjoy that tradition. It seems I have more in common with such idiots than the wise devotees.

A growing number of devotees are entangled in the whole 'fame' thing. The greatest of Ramana devotees will seldom if ever be heard of. They are too busy attending to their own business.

Philosophical discussions can be fun but they have nothing to do with actual practice and yet some people use them instead of practice.

When was Ramana Maharshi Usurped by the Neo-Advaitists?

It is difficult to pinpoint a place in time that coincides precisely with the usurping of the public face of Ramana Maharshi but, as even a cursory search on the internet will show, it is self-evident that the ever-burgeoning pseudo-advaita crowd have hijacked the Ramana 'persona' of the old Sage of Arunachala. Unfortunately, in the quest for personality [loosely dressed up in a quest for *moksha*], they have either neglected the teaching of the Maharshi or misconstrued it entirely.

The idea that one can follow the person of the Sage, without putting that Sage's teaching into practice, is mere folly. It is not just the pseuds that are guilty, in this respect. The worst offenders are those organisations that claim affiliation, officially or unofficially, with Ramana Maharshi, but market new

age twaddle in his name. Oh yes!! You know who you are. These organisations talk a lot and practice very little. They do, of course, offer *satsang*, more often than not, conducted by one who has absolutely no authority, or ability, to do so

Cutting the Knot of the Heart

Stepping out

I just received an email from a friend asking about cutting the heart knot. Here are a few notes and quotes:

Question: “The expression ‘*hridaya granthi bhedanam’* [cutting the heart knot] occurs in Sri Ramana Gita. What is meant by it?”

Answer: “That is what I say, ‘going away’, ‘exit’, ‘extinction of all *vasanas’*, destruction of the ego’, ‘I’, ‘destruction of ‘*jivathva’*, ‘destruction of the mind’, and so many other names. All mean the same thing – *mano nasanam* (destruction of the mind) is *hridaya granthi bhedanam* [cutting the heart knot]. The word *jnanam* also means the same thing – some technical word for the sake of recognising.” (Suri Nagamma's Letters, 9th April 1947)

The simple fact of the matter is that one who desires liberation must cut the knot (*granthi*) of the ego (*ahamkara*). *Vichara* is the way whether that is tinged with *bhakti* or straight up no nonsense enquiry is down to the *vasanas* of the *sadhaka*. "While disguised in the form of words, through ignorance,

one does not reach the Heart-Lotus, but when such ignorance is rent asunder one discovers that identity alone." (Amrtabindu Upanishad, 15)

"The ego has one and only one characteristic. The ego functions as the knot between the Self which is Pure Consciousness and the physical body which is inert and insentient. The ego is therefore called the *chit-jada granthi*. In your investigation into the source of *aham-vritti*, you take the essential *chit* aspect of the ego; and for this reason the enquiry must lead to the realization of the pure consciousness of the Self." (From Maharshi's Gospel, 2.6)

bhidyate hrdayagranthih chidyante sarvasamSayAh|
kshIyante casya karmANi tasmin dRshTe parAvare ||

“When the One that is the Truth of the high and the low is experienced, then the heart-knot is cut, all doubts are dispelled, and all his actions are liquidated.”

(Mundhaka Upanishad, 2.2.8)

(This verse is from Mundaka Upanishad, v. 2.2.8, quoted under Sri Ramanaparavidyopanishad, v.81, by 'Who'.) Bhagavata 1.2.21 is very similar and only differs in a couple of words.)

See also Vivekacudamani, 424 in Ramana Maharshi's translation from "Collected Works":

"How then should the wise man, who has severed the knot of the Heart with the sword of wisdom, continue to perform the various vain actions which occupied him during the time of his delusion? What cause could induce him to activity?"

Buddhi (Mind) stands at the Doorway to Liberation

Dvaram – gateway

tad dvāramapavargasya

That is the door to liberation.

(Bhartrhari)

Having ears, the attentive *sadhaka* does not dwell on what is heard. Having eyes, the attentive *sadhaka* does not dwell on what is seen. Although immersed in the world, the attentive *sadhaka* does not react, inappropriately, to the world.

“If you do not make *Atma vichara*, then *loka vichara* creeps in. That which is not, is sought for, but not that which is obvious.” (Talk 186)

Note: *loka*; that which is seen (and heard), worldly affairs.

Atma vichara includes *pratyahara* which is turning away or withdrawing from external affairs and holding to the ongoing internal question posed by Enquiry.

In Sri Ramanaparavidyopanishad, K. Lakshmana Sarma (aka 'Who') writes "praśnasya ko'smīti sadaiva sādhordvārāṇi sarvatra ca sambhavanti – Everywhere and at all times doors (opportunities) pop up which lead to the question 'Who am I?'"

The point being that there is no point in setting aside place and time to do *vichara*. Nor lighting the correct incense and wearing appropriately ethnic clothes while sitting in the lotus position, chanting a mantra you have never taken time to understand. If this is your idea of vichara then you have missed the point. Enquiry is the simple control of wayward thoughts. Thoughts like "setting aside place and time, lighting the correct incense and wearing appropriately ethnic clothes while sitting in the lotus position (or any other yoga position), chanting a mantra you misunderstand" any one of which will provide ample fuel for *atma vichara*. Ask the question... "Who is this poser?"

"*Buddhi* (mind) stands at the doorway to liberation. Turning one way *buddhi*, 'in the form of the enjoyer, that which is enjoyed, and the enjoyment,' wanders, discriminates and rationalises a sequential description of the empirical worldview. Multiple views dependent on *ahamkara* are then observed. 'Although undifferentiated it (*Brahman*) behaves as if differentiated because of its (denotative) potentials.' Turning the other way *buddhi* stops dead in its tracks and *Brahman* shines forth in undifferentiated splendor as always." (Miles Wright: Grammar as the Door to Liberation)

This potential presents through the ego when *Brahman* looks out at the world. When it stops looking outwards, ego and the potential does not exist.

Death is a concept propagated by the *buddhi*. With regard to the Universe (*Brahman*) it has no relevance.

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"*Buddhi*" is indeed used in various ways dependent on context. Pure intellect is an intellect which through repeated practice of *vichara* constantly turns towards Self. Remember my analogy of standing at the door. We all stand

in the doorway. Look one way and we see the world (*dehatma buddhi*). Look the other and only Self exists. Pure intellect pulls us back to the Self by means of *vichara*.

Eight Symptoms

These symptoms arise as self-ish and resolve as self-less. They can be the harbingers of Self or remain as bonds to self. *Vichara* is the key.

becoming stunned: stopping of all senses, becoming like a statue. The entire body is affected. Movement is impossible. This can be brought on by fear (the ego's fear of dying). Indeed, fear (with *vichara*) drives the mind inwards at a tremendous rate, time stands still and one's entire life is (re-)lived in a milli-second. Wonder, of the gob-smacked variety, can have exactly the same effect. As can anger. Prolonging this state results in *pralaya* (see below). Intense fear (or wonder, or anger) coupled with intense *vichara* knocks the ego for six and *sphurana* stands revealed. The all embracing pull of the Heart surpasses the grossness of the senses.

perspiration: fear, anger, trepidation or exhilaration can produce ecstatic perspiration. This is powerful mindstuff. *Kumbhaka* also brings this on. This can occur through *pranayama* but the ecstatic symptom (often as a result of mature *vichara*) comes about as a result of the sudden and spontaneous holding of the breath.

standing of hairs on body (and that strange rippling sensation up and down the spine). In the main this is an amazement and wonder (of the gob-smacked variety) thing, when everything comes together, in the moment. Absolute, thought-free understanding. Also ecstatic jubilation (e.g. *bhajans*

do it for many). Fear can produce this symptom too, but that is not ecstasy, although for the mature practitioner of *vichara* it becomes so, spontaneously. When verse 5 of Upadesa Saram is truly taken to heart, all is wonder, and horripilation is a regular occurrence.

faltering of the voice: nervousness (sometimes annoyance) in the presence of Guru, Sage or God. As can be seen these ecstatic symptoms are brought on by intense emotion and this is the ideal soil for intense *vichara*. When intense, single-minded *japa* reaches this state, for example, *vichara* is triumphant.

trembling: helplessness, anger towards, fear of, despair and grief of separation from the Beloved (Self). The *bhakti-rasa* of helplessness and beseechment, often accompanied by flowing tears. Many *bhaktas* become addicted to this state and find it hard to go further. It is an ideal moment to chop at the root of such a preoccupied *ahamkara*.

changing of body colour: shyness, jubilation, helplessness, etc.

tears: (uncontrollable) of jubilation, or of separation (*vihara*).

devastation: this is the dance of *Siva* at the end of time (*pralaya*); this is the resounding Om at the Heart of all; when ego loses hold in faint or loss of consciousness (see 'becomes stunned' above), sometimes accompanied by falling down, *vichara*, *vichara*, *vichara*; the pull of the Heart is irresistible; in this state ego simply melts, if it returns it does so as a mere shadow.

Are you the Body?

"tat tvam [asi]" (“You are That” or Truth), acrylic on canvas, 2010

Achievement of the Real alone matters. The loss of the ‘I’ is the main fact, and not the loss of the body. Identity of the Self with the body is the real bondage. Leave off the false notion and perceive intuitively the Real. That alone matters. If you melt a gold ornament before testing it to be gold, what matters it how it is melted, whole or in parts, or of what shape the ornament was? All that you are interested in is if it is gold.

The dead man sees not his body. It is the survivor that thinks about the manner in which the body is parted from. The realised have no death with or without the body, the realised man is equally aware and sees no difference. To him the one state is not superior to the other. To an outsider also the fortunes of a liberated one’s body need not be of any concern; mind your business. Realise the Self; after realisation there will be time to think of what form of death is preferable to you.

“It is the false identity of the Self with the body that causes the idea of preference, etc. Are you the body? Were you aware of it when you were fast asleep last night? No! What is it that exists now and troubles you? It is ‘I’. Get rid of it and be happy.” (Talk 32)

Having gained a quickly fading, temporary pleasure from one thing, again and again, the mind urgently flits to another and yet another, ever-seeking elusive happiness.

Atma Vichara (self enquiry) is *dvaita* (dual). It is a movement in *ajnana* (ignorance). Neither *advaita* (non-dual) nor *jnana* (knowledge) move. While ego might be tempted by spiritual practice, Self has no need for it. This is the paradox.

Mind claiming to experience ultimate reality is like the image in the mirror declaring that it is experiencing the origin of the image.

It is common to intellectualise the process of *Vichara* without realising it. Then *Vichara* can slip into mere polemical chatter. Ask the question but do not look for an answer. Thereby eliminating the mindstuff of polemics.

“Everything arises from you, like bubbles arise from the sea.” (Ashtavakra Samhita, 5.2)

Where truth is ... falsehood is not. *Brahman* is truth. The Self cannot be attained without practising truth. Suffering is the result of false relationships, false fears, false ideas. Liberation is truth.

While the *jnani* acknowledges differences he does so without relinquishing the one Real in all of them.

Do not speak about your experiences to everybody, least of all to those of a contrary nature.

There is no separation between the empirical world and ‘liberation’. The user of language can experience the non-dual reality by knowing the truth of its origin.

In the *mahAvAkya* "*tat tvam asi*" – "that you are", 'that' represents *Brahman* and 'you' represents the real Self. It is a statement of fact which is revealed by the *jnani*. It is foolish indeed to assume from this statement that the 'ordinary "I"', clothed in mindstuff, is *Brahman*. Furthermore, no matter how

hard this 'ordinary "I"', the insentient ego-I, tries, and no matter what guise it cooks up in its futile attempt to try, it can no more turn around and look at the true Self than an insentient torch can turn around and look at the one who wields it. As a torch is switched on and off and eventually laid aside when it is no longer required to look into the darkness, so, the ego-tool, having been switched on to navigate the mindstuff world, is switched off, and laid aside, when negotiation through ignorance is no longer required. Then 'I', the true witness, self-shining, shines forth, what light can hope to illuminate that which is self-luminous? The primary method used to lay ego aside and realise the truth is the question "*ko'ham*" – "who am I?"

Mahavakyas

Although there are many, many *vAkyas* (sentences or utterances) in the *Upanishads* and elsewhere in the *Vedas*, these four stand out as beacons; ideas for contemplation and revelation of Truth. All students of *Vedanta* must ultimately come to term with these. In as such they stimulate Self-enquiry, they are truly *Upadesa* and as such are frequently offered to student for *sravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana* (hearing of the truth from Guru (*sravana*), thinking over what has been said (*manana*), uninterrupted contemplation (*nididhyasana*) of what the Guru has said). Although simple, they impact on Consciousness.

The following phrases are said to be phrases of truth:

prajñānam brahma: – "Knowledge is *Brahman*" (Aitareya Upanishad)

tat tvam asi – "That you are" (Chãndogya Upanishad)

aham brahmāsmi – "I am *Brahman*" Bṛhadãranyaka Upanishad)

ayam ātmā brahma – "This Self is *Brahman*" (Mãndükya Upanishad)

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"*prajnanam Brahma*" ("Consciousness is *Brahman*"), from Aitareya Upanishad, reveals the nature of the Self; "*aham Brahmasmi*" ("I am *Brahman*"), which is found in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, reveals the source of the enquiry; "*tat tvam asi*" ("That Thou Art2) is found in the Chandogya Upanishad; this is the statement Guru Ramana reiterates again and again. "*Ayam*

Atma brahma" ("This *Atman* is *Brahman*"), this is found in the Mandukya Upanishad; this identifies our very Being with *Brahman*.

tat tvam asi ati nijam

"*tat tvam asi*" can be translated in various ways along the lines of "You (or 'thou') are (or 'art') that." *ati nijam* means "entirely the Self." It is a statement of absolute innate, unquestionable identity. So "You are that, entirely the Self." Or perhaps, "You are that Self, entirely." "You are that innate Self, in its entirety." Or, "You are That Self, continually."

aham brahmāsmi

The śruti vākya (direct statement of the *Upanishads*), "*aham brahmāsmi*", relates to the state of being, not a mode of mind. (cf. Talk 54)

deho 'ham (I am the body) is limitation and is the root of all selfish actions and desires, *brahmāham* (I am *Brahman*) is beyond such limitation

How long to realise the Self?

Roasting more Chestnuts on an Open Fire

(Quotes from Prof. N. R. Krishnamoorthi Aiyer's "The Essence of Ribhu Gita")

All objective knowledge, all thought forms, all visible objects, all things heard, all questions and answers, all the food consumed and all other illusions, not being apart from the Self, should be regarded as *Brahman*-Self only. (Ch.13, v.2)

Firmly abiding in the Self **one acquires the totality of all knowledge and achieves the successful completion of all endeavours and duties**. In that state one should abide blissful and still, eschewing the least ripple of thought. (Ch.26, v.25)

and yet...

There are no such things as achieved objectives and the efforts leading to them, **association with the wise or the ignorant**, efforts of learning and knowledge acquired, acts of enquiry and practice, the learner or the learned, and any goals achieved. What exists is only *Brahman*, the effulgent Awareness-Self. (Ch.23, v.10)

and yet...

That realised person who abides in the *Brahman*-Self, and has lost all feelings of differentiation of self and non-self, is the *Jnani* or *Mukta Purusha*. Such a *Jnani* is rare to find even by searching among millions of people. **If one has the lucky opportunity of getting his *darshan*** (personal view and contact) **one attains purification from all his sins**, and what is more, such a person's ego gets liquidated at once. (Ch.19, v.10)

The universe was neither born, nor maintained, nor dissolved; this is the plain truth. The basic screen of pure Being-Awareness-Stillness devoid of all the moving shadow pictures of name and form of the universe is the sole, eternal Existence. (Ch.2, v.33)

and yet...

In me, the pure Awareness-Self, **the universe is born, maintained and dissolved as the mind**. Therefore **there are no mind and thought forms of objects apart from me the Self**. In this firm experience one should ever abide. (Ch.32, v.35)

The existence of the illusion of silver in mother of pearl is not a reality apart from the reality of mother of pearl, which is the basic reality. The illusion of the universe is based on the mind, which again is an illusion based on the still Awareness-Being-Self. (Ch.2, v.35)

Ignorance and indifference in regard to the enquiry of the truth about oneself is the store house of nescience and trouble, blocking the view of the Self, and creating in a split second all sorts of illusions and harassment of mental worry. **Non-enquiry renders *bhavana* impossible**. (Ch.32, v.19)

In short, non-enquiry will steep one for ever in the ocean of *samsara* (earthly suffering). There is no greater enemy for one than non-enquiry. Therefore this habit must be overcome in order to fix the mind in the *bhavana* which leads to abidance in the Self. (Ch.32, v.20)

Enquiry should be made this wise: With the kind help of the *Sat Guru* one should enquire **'Who am I?** what is this world? what is the reality behind all these?' (Ch.32, v.21)

The conscious introspective concentration of Self-enquiry ('Who am I'?) kills all thoughts and destroys the dense darkness of nescience; it effaces all worry; it illuminates the intellect with the radiance of pure awareness; it wipes out all conceptual confusions; it fixes one in *Siva*-Self; **it transforms a host of impending disasters into auspicious events**; and lastly, it destroys the ego-mind utterly with all its afflictions. (Ch.32, v.24)

Whatever names and forms are seen by me in my dream are not anything apart from me. Even so, this world seen by me in my waking state is not anything apart from me, the Awareness-Self that I am. The wise one should **give up all differentiation of Self and non-Self, and abide as pure Self only**. (Ch.35, v.23)

Confusing! It doesn't have to be. There are two perspectives in this chatter. It moves from one to the other as *sadhakas* should do. It makes no pretense. Understand that *sadhana* and "functioning as an individual in the world of name and form" are one and the same. Stop the pretense. Talking the game is falsehood. One must play it!! The inanimate mind is entirely dependent on the impetus behind it.

To hold on to the conviction born of Self Enquiry that "I am no doubt the Screen – *Brahman*-Self, and the world picture thereon, though evanescent, is no doubt 'I am Self' only", and to abide still and blissful in that conviction is the acme of all *sadhanas*, like divine worship, charitable gifts, spiritual austerities, *mantra-japa* and *samadhi* as well. (Ch.16, v.41)

and finally... for all the *advaita* twitterers that decry the dualistic notions of *bhakti*...

Why waste words? This is the truth in a nutshell. **Only those who have earned the Grace of our Lord *Siva* by long devotional worship** will get the rare opportunity of reading this scriptural text which leads to the bliss of peace everlasting in *Brahman*-Self. (Ch.27, v.44)

Ajatavada

Interconnectedness

Ajatavada is a philosophical concept within *Advaita Vedanta*, one of the major schools of Hindu philosophy. Ther term "*Ajatavada*" can be broken down as:

A: prefix meaning non or not

Jata: from 'jan' meaning born or produced

Vada: meaning doctrine or theory

Thus, *Ajatavada* translates roughly to "the doctrine of non-origination" or "the theory of no creation"

Key Point of Ajatavada:

1. **Non-Origination of the world**: This doctrine asserts that the world of appearances (*maya* or illusion) never really comes into being. There is no actual creation or destruction; everything is an eternal, unchanging *Brahman* (the ultimate reality).
2. **Reality and Illusion**: According to *Ajatavada*, what we perceive as the world is not created but is merely an illusion or a misperception of the non-dual, eternal consciousness (*Brahman*). This perspective negates the concept of causality in the phenomenal world.
3. **Critique of Other Views**: *Ajatavada* critiques other creation theories like:
   Vivartavada (the doctrine of apparent transformation), which posits that the world is a mere appearance of *Brahman* without any real change in *Brahman*.
   Parinamavada (the doctrine of real transformation), which suggests that the world is a real transformation of *Brahman*.

Ajatavada goes further by dismissing even the idea of transformation or manifestation, suggesting that there is no transformation because there was never a separate entity to transform from *Brahman*.

4. ***Advaita Vedanta*:** Within *Advaita*, *Ajatavada* is often associated with the teaching of *Gaudapada*, who is considered the first systematic exponent of *Advaita*. His work, "Māṇḍūkya Kārikā," particularly explores this concept.
5. **Spiritual Implications:** From a practical standpoint, *Ajatavada* teaches that liberation or enlightenment (*moksha*) comes from the realization that the apparent world is not separate from *Brahman*. There's no need for a process of creation or dissolution; the recognition of one's true nature as *Brahman* transcends these concepts.
6. **Philosophical Debate:** This doctrine leads to deep philosophical debates about reality, perception, and the nature of existence. It challenges the conventional understanding of time, space, and causality, suggesting a radical non-dualism where all distinctions are ultimately illusory.

In summary, *Ajatavada* posits that the world we perceive does not originate because it is not separate from *Brahman*; it's an eternal, unchanging reality where the concept of creation itself is an illusion.

anādinidhanam brahma śabdatattvam yadaksaram / vivartate 'rthabhāvena prakriyā jāgato yatah //

(Bhartrahari, Vakyapadiya, 1.1)

"*Brahman*, which is without a beginning and an end, the essence of language, that imperishable AUM, from which the world-process 'appears to unfold' through a transformation into objects".

"He who at the time of death abandons the body, mind fixed on 'Me' alone, attains the True Nature of 'I' …of this there is no doubt. Whatever one remembers when one leaves the body, to that alone one goes, because of 'thinking' of that state." (Bhagavad Gita, 8.5,6)

When the mind becomes pure, it instantly rushes to its source, like a mountain stream rushing towards the sea, effortlessly overcoming all obstacles in its path. *Atma vichara* is the process which rids the mind of all mindstuff.

The 'end' comes right now... now... (ad infinitum). The only barrier to this is the ego and its efforts to perpetuate itself. Act now. *Atma Vichara* is the means and the goal. Any delay is the not so subtle ploy of the ego.

The universe in diversity is spoken of as reality. Pairs of opposites vie for our attention. Good/bad, hot/cold, rich/poor, spiritual/material etc. They are the all-important opposites. All important because without them the universe as we 'know' it would collapse into Unity.

jñānī tvātmaiva me matam

"My conclusion is that the *Jnani* is indeed my very Self."

(Bhagavad Gita, 7.18)

"Pursue the enquiry 'Who am I?' relentlessly! Seek out the root of your personality! Find out wherefrom the I-thought arises! Turn the mind within. With practice, the current of thoughts will slow down and an unerring intuition will be felt." (Hewitt, p. 121)

This world is part of the illusion (*maya*), symptomatic of the human condition, which, having forgotten its own Self, is lost in false perception.

The 'I'-thought is the root from whence all other thoughts arise. As long as any answer to the question, "who am I?" is found, further enquiry is neces-

sary. If one focusses in this way, the mind (ego) vanishes and the Self remains self-evident.

"If *Brahman* be 'One without a second', wherefrom, and why, did *Maya* come and act upon It? This is an old, old question, leading to no end, since no answer can ever be given from within the realm of *Maya*." (Swami Virajananda, Paramartha Prasanga)

As friction brings out fire which is in wood, so, the Supreme Self, which lies hidden in the cave of the heart, is revealed by the persistent practice of *vichara*.

dṛśyate tv agryayā buddhyā

"It (Self) is seen with a one-pointed (resolved) intellect."

(Katha Upanishad, 1.3.12)

Sabdapurvayoga based on Bhartrhari

Language, Thought and Reality

(Vakyapadiya of Bhartrhari, 1.1-4)

1. *Brahman*, which is without a beginning and an end, the essence of language, the imperishable syllable (aum), from which the world-process 'appears to unfold' through a transformation into objects.

2. Which, celebrated as neither more nor less than One, becomes fragmented because of recourse to (its denotating) potentiality. Although undifferentiated it behaves as if differentiated because of its (denotative) potentials.

3. Dependent on the power of time, which has small divisions superimposed on it, are the six kinds of verbal activity, beginning with production (i.e. production, existence, transformation, growth, decay, and destruction), (these are) the origins of the divisions in Being.

4. The One, the seed of all, to whom this multiplicity belongs, remains in the form of the enjoyer, that which is enjoyed, and the enjoyment.

This (grammar) is the wonderful ultimate abode of the threefold speech which is divided into the various levels *vaikhari*, *madhyama* and *paśyanti.* (VP, 1.134)

The first level, which is called *pasyanti*, is undifferentiated in any way and word and meaning remain without sequence or form. This is the unmanifested *Sabdabrahman*.

As *sabda* moves into the next level, *Madhyama*, temporal differentiation, albeit only subtly present, allows for the potential formation of a sequence which is associated with *buddhi*. Although still unspoken, the concept is re-

alised at this level as pre-speech in the mind of the speaker, or as post-speech in the mind of the hearer. It is an internal discourse which takes the form of thought. It is speech in its latent form. This level can only exist courtesy of the individual, 'I'. Without this primary thought no differentiation can take place. This thought is always the first to arise and the last to subside.

Vaikhari is situated within the physical domain of phonetics and phonology. At this level we can use scientific instrumentation to measure language. Although *prana* is only subtly present in the previous level here it plays a predominant part. It is this physical function of breath along with all the associated restrictions imposed by physics and the articulatory process that ties speech to the linear order.

SabdamAyAvrto naiva tamasA yAti pushkare |
bhinne tamasi caikatvaneka evAnupaSyati || 15 ||

"While disguised in the form of words, through ignorance, one does not reach the Heart-Lotus, but when such ignorance is rent asunder one discovers that identity alone."

(Amrtabindu Upanishad)

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The subject of *Sabdapurvayoga* came up again today. Apparently, if one googles it, not much information comes up. I wrote a short online introduction to the subject a few years ago. You can find it here.

"It is said that the self of the speaker is the word situated within, the great bull with whom one desires union. Therefore that which purifies the word is attainment of the supreme Self. He who knows the truth of its origin attains the immortal *Brahman*." (Bhartrhari in Vakyapadiya, 1.130-131)

Sabdapurvayoga* is *Atma Vichara

tasmād yah śabdasamskārah sā siddhih paramātmanah | pravrttitattvajñas
tad brahmāmrtam aśnute ||

"…. that which purifies the word is the attainment of the Supreme Self. One who knows the truth of its origin attains the immortal *Brahman*."

(Bhartrhari's Vakyapadiya, 1.131)

Sabdapurvayoga is the return to that state prior to the arising of the ego. The Grammarian Bhartrhari's method for attaining the Self involves tracing the mind back to its source. At that point the unreality of the ego is discovered. This is the true purification of the word. When *Brahman* is known to be all there is, there can no longer be any misunderstanding?

Bhartrhari has stated that Grammar is the straight road for those who would attain liberation in *Brahman*. The twentieth century Sage of Arunachala, Ramana Maharshi, similarly referred to the discipline of atma *vichara* as the straight path to Self-realisation. The essence of Bhartrhari's method is *atma vichara*. *Sabdapurvayoga* is *atma vichara*.

***Pratibhā* – the pre-thought experience of reality**

pratibhA (the revelation of knowledge) guides everyday practical life.

According to Bhartrhari this occurs in six ways:

1. svabhAva – nature – eating, sleeping, natural functions

2. caraNa – prescribed action – tradition

3. abhyAsa – practice – silencing of the mind

4. yoga – concentration – mental discipline

5. adRshTa – the unseen – causation

6. viSishTopahita – heart to heart transmission

Bhartrhari, the great grammarian, described *'pratibhā'* as the meaning-whole of the sentence which is perceived as 'an instantaneous flash of intuition'. Complete understanding in the blink of an eye. Devoid of linearity. It has nothing to do with reason per se and yet reason can point to it. Although the meanings of the individual words contribute to the 'flash' it is quite different from them and can flash even before the utterance has been completed.

Pure *Pratibhā* is the individual's experience of suchness. *Pratibhā* is not limited to words and sentences. It is the innate 'shining' principle in all living beings. By means of *Pratibhā* the spontaneous natural behaviour of all birds and animals takes place without instruction or any other prompting. It is the reason the Indian cuckoo sings in Spring, for example. Although any experience of *Pratibhā* is uniquely interpreted, by each and every individual,

words can be used to convey it. Words, bound by time and space, point to it, but, on their own, never give a true representation of it. *Pratibhā* on the part of the hearer (or reader, viewer, etc.) is required. In essence, it is the necessary contribution of one's unadulterated inner Self, in the form of intuition, which reveals the complete, and indivisible meaning without pandering to time and space. Bhartrhari writes: “The power which resides in words is the sole cause of this universe. Led by the intuitive self, this appearance of division is understood.” (Vakyapadiya, 1.118)

Blog-Posts and Art

Like a gooseberry in the palm of your hand

[Miles' last blog, ‘Behind My Hand’ (February 2014 – April 2022), is still online at *behindmyhand.blogspot.com*. These contributions are mainly from that blog, but also from other blogs and forums.]

Like a gooseberry

Self-knowledge is an easy thing,
The easiest thing there is.
The Self is something that's entirely real
Even for the most ordinary man,
It could be said that a clear gooseberry *
Is an illusion by comparison.

* The fruit mentioned in the Tamil text is the nelli, widely grown in India but unknown in Europe. It is more or less transparent and hence "as clear as

the nelli in one's hand" is the Tamil equivalent to the English saying: "as clear as crystal". (taken from The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi, edited by Arthur Osborne)

Dhyāna

What is *Dhyāna*? (ch. ch'an-na; jap. zen)

Dhyāna (skt.) is where erroneous thoughts are not. The word was transliterated into Chinese as ch'an – a contraction of ch'an-na - and into Japanese as zenna – better known as zen.

Dhyāna is a direct pointing to the heart, without undue dependence on words (i.e. speech, scriptures, conceptualisation, discursive thought), revealing *svabhāva* (one's own true nature) which is beyond discriminations of self and other.

True *Dhyāna* is not something to be relegated to seated meditation at specific times but rather a practice to be carried with one at all times. It is without stages. It is not bound to, or by, any religion. It is the direct experience not only of sages, saints, buddhas but also of anyone else you care to mention.

Satsanga – janasanga

Many modern day *satsangas* are really no more than *janasangas* (association with the worldly-minded). The object of the *janasanga* is atyAhAra (excessive collecting [along the lines of the old "I-spy" books]).

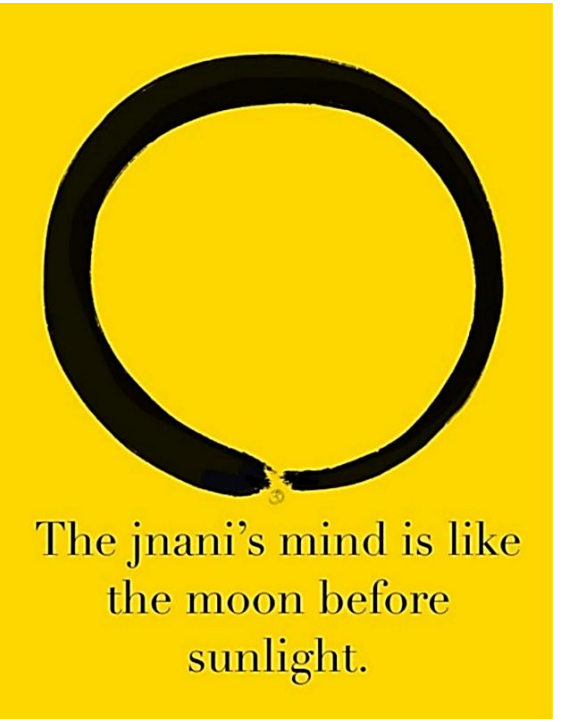
utsAhAn niScayAd dhairyAt
tat-tat-karma-pravartanAt
sanga-tyAgAt sato vRtteH
shaDbhir vicharaH prasidhyati

(Rupa Gosvami's Sri Upadesamrta, v. 3)

“Through perseverance, ascertainment, constancy, by practicing the various aids (*Sravana*, *manana*, *nididhyAsana*, *samAdhi*), by giving up *janasanga*, through the example of the Sage – by these six, *vichara* is accomplished.”

In Talk 647, Sri Ramana Maharshi says, "The enquiry ‘Who am I?’ is the *sravana*. The ascertainment of the true import of ‘I’ is the *manana*. The practical application on each occasion is *nididhyasana*. Being as ‘I’ is *samadhi*."

Jnani's Mind



Observing the moon before the rising sun, Sri Bhagavan remarked: "See the moon and also the cloud in the sky. There is no difference in their brilliance. The moon looks only like a speck of cloud. The *jnani's* mind is like this moon before sunlight. It is there but not shining of itself." (Talk 460)

The Heart comprises all.

"The world is not other than the mind, the mind is not other than the Heart; that is the whole truth." (Talk 616)

So the Heart comprises all. This is what is taught to *Svetaketu* by the illustration of the seed of a fig tree.[1] The source is a point without any dimensions. It expands as the cosmos on the one hand and as Infinite Bliss on the

[1] This story is found at: https://spiritualeducation.org/library/story/svetaketu

other. That point is the pivot. From it a single *vasana* starts, multiplies as the experiencer 'I', experience, and the world.

Umwelt

While the practice on *vichara* is part of your umwelt, its consummate reality can never be so.

As long as *vichara* is regarded as umwelt, so long must it remain so.

Floating Flower

The floating flower
Cannot be caught:
That wave that would catch it
Pushes it.

(Rabindranath Tagore in Sparks, trans. William Radice)

"One should go beyond such relative knowledge and abide in the Self. Real knowledge is such experience and not apprehension by the mind." (Talk 285)

Kundalini and other such Conceptions

The mind is rumored to be like a coiled-up serpent (*kundalinī* – कुण्डलिनी) which travels along six *chakras* or seven, dependent on the particular school of thought. Mental conceptions abound like weeds on an unkempt path. Once one starts along such a path, conceptions thrive.

"The objects or feelings or thoughts are all mental conceptions. The mind rises after the rise of the I-thought or the ego. Wherefrom does the ego rise? From the abstract consciousness or Pure intelligence." (Talk 244)

Ducking Diving Fishing

From a small craft
I drop my line many fathoms
How often have I aimed for golden scales?
Tonight I didn't take the boat pole in vain

The reflection of the moon moved
and I hooked it with my barb.

(from A Quiet Room, The Poetry of Zen Master Jakushitsu)

"Keep an open mind, dive within and find out the Self. The truth will itself dawn upon you. Why should you determine beforehand if the finality is unity absolute or qualified, or duality? There is no meaning in it. The ascertainment is now made by logic and by intellect. The intellect derives light from the Self (the Higher Power). How can the reflected and partial light of the intellect envisage the whole and the original Light? The intellect cannot reach the Self and how can it ascertain its nature?" (Talk 63)

The art of *vichara* is a bit like fishing. We cast the line (*vichara*) at an angle which we think will reach the target but, like light refraction (Snell's Law) or waves on the surface, the process can be foiled.

Fix the Mind on 'me'.

mayy eva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṁ niveśaya |
nivasiṣyasi mayy eva ata ūrdhvaṁ na saṁśayaḥ ||

"Fix the mind on me alone, place the thought process in me. Hereafter, without doubt, you will abide in me alone."

(Bhagavad Gita, 12.8)

Note: the thought process arises from 'me'. Trace the source. Remain there.

The above Verse from Bhagavad Gita verse is a concise description of *vichara* (Self Enquiry).

Atma Vichara leads to the source of the ego. There the ego disappears. Remaining as that source the ego no longer arises.

Usefulness of Explanations

Explanations are always expressed using existent knowledge. If you do not share this knowledge, they have little value. While they may be considered to be pointers, without appropriate discrimination, they are like decomposing heaps of dung.

Contextual Words

Acrylic and collage on handmade paper, February 2010

In this age of sickly sweet soundbites words seldom match the reality they profess to describe. They are used to manipulate context for egotistic ends.

Words have the potential to release truth, when used with due care and attention, but if they are abused they bind the abuser to a mind made hell and the indiscriminate recipient to a blind alley.

Unawareness

Sphuranic unawareness of "I am" is realisation. The awareness of Self is absolute and neither requires nor admits any object.

The spurious claim of the awareness of "I am" is the misguided hearsay of one obsessed with dualistic identity.

Sacred Space

Acrylic media and collage on handmade paper, March 2010

When one learns to live free from dogma and superstition only then can one understand the sacred space. When one stops travelling here and there and abides still, that space is unavoidable. One cannot move without understanding.

Self is not Happiness.

„Since there is no chance of the thought 'I am happy' arising in that State of Non-Duality, the Self transcends happiness; It is not something having the form of happiness." (Guru Ramana Vachana Mala, p. 294)

In this regard, Sri K. Lakshmana Sarma notes that when the Self is described as blissful, bliss or as happiness, such a description is only tentative. When

the *sadhaka's* mind matures s/he will understand that the Self is better described as 'being, in the state of *tRpti* (satiety or desirelessness)'.

The Renouncer

न हि देहभृता शक्यं त्यक्तुं कर्माण्यशेषतः |
यस्तु कर्मफलत्यागी स त्यागीत्यभिधीयते ||11||

na hi dehabhṛtā śakyaṁ tyaktuṁ karmāṇyaśeṣataḥ
yastu karmaphalatyāgī sa tyāgītyabhidhīyate

(Bhagavad Gita, 18.11)

"It is certainly not possible for the embodied being to abandon activities entirely. However, one who renounces the fruits of action is called 'the renouncer'."

Note

When there is no "I", can there be any *karma*!

So long as egoity lasts the mind games go on. When egoity ceases to be, actions become spontaneous. The mind games might appear to go on but who on earth is playing them?

Sifting Reality from Unreality

A certain visitor formulated a question, saying that meditation is more direct than investigation, because the former holds on to the truth whereas the latter sifts the truth from untruth.

M.: "For the beginner meditation on a form is more easy and agreeable. Practice of it leads to *Atma vichara* which consists in sifting the Reality from unreality.

What is the use of holding on to truth when you are filled with antagonistic factors?

Atma vichara directly leads to realisation by removing the obstacles which make you think that the Self is not already realised." (Talk 298)

Peace in the 21st Century

Oil on hardboard, September 2007

Peace is fast becoming a sliding concept in the mindset of the 21st century. And those that one might look up to and celebrate as a man or woman of peace seem to be few and far between. True 'Peace' can be found only in one who has managed to curb reliance on ego. As Ramana Maharshi said "It is as difficult for a *jnani* to engage in thoughts as it is for an *ajnani* to be free from thought."

No Point in becoming 'like' Buddha or Ramana

There is no point in becoming 'like' Buddha or Ramana or any other so-called enlightened being. In effect, that is simply mindstuff.

The ideas of enlightenment and need for *vichara* belong to ego alone. When ego searches within the foothills of its own existence and finds its source, it settles down exhausted, vanquished. At that point there is no longer any need for *vichara*. Only wayward mind needs the map of *vichara*. Self is ever self-aware of its whereabouts.

Don't think, do it!

Brahman described (*bhedābheda*)

Brahman is other than the universe.
Brahman is not other than the universe.

Note: *bhedābheda* - a seeming contradiction which serves as an interesting koan. “Different and the same.”

Reciprocal Altruism

Brahmakaravrtti – this is the (moral) conduct of one whose sole intent is to diffuse *Brahman* widely and abundantly.

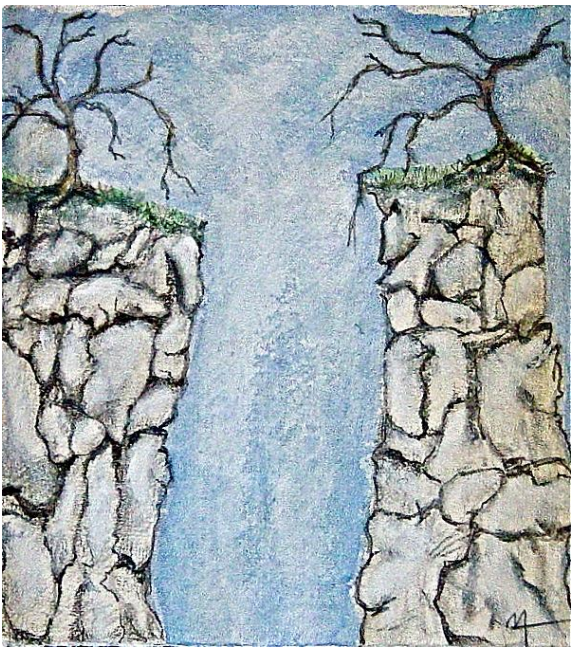
The practice of *vichara* is not selfishness. It is the opposite. It removes the separation of self and other. It is *bhedabheda*, the identity of self and universe, simultaneously one and different. During these difficult times plagued by the current worldwide pandemic, reciprocal altruism should be uppermost in the mind of all.

***Brahman* is one**

Bhartrhari (the Grammarian) asserts that powers such as *kālaśakti* (time), *karanaśakti* (causality), *dikśakti* (direction), *sādhanaśakti* (means) and *kriyaśakti* (action) are non-different from *Brahman*. Although they might be considered in some philosophies, such as by the *Vaisheshika*[1], to be separately existing entities, in the Vakyapadiya, they are considered powers of *Sabdabrahman*. They always appear united in the same object, function together, and have no independent reality at any level of discussion.

[1] one of the six classical systems of Indian philosophy

Tree and Seed



"The creation is said to have an origin. How? Like a tree and the seed from which it has grown. How was the seed produced? From a similar tree. Where is the end to the series of questions? Therefore one must know one's Self before the world is known." (Talk 548)

This quote is a wonderful koan. Which came first the chicken or the egg.

Mind's Love of Complexity

The mind welcomes complexity before simplicity. Complexity allows division. Division allows analysis of components. This is empirical and therefore palpable. This is the survival mechanism for *ahamkara*.

Sudden Understanding

Svabhāva (self nature) is revealed, having resolved all opposites by means of *vichara* (self enquiry), a sudden understanding, with reliance on neither name nor form, unattached to a single thing.

See the world as consisting of *Brahman.*

दृष्टिं ज्ञानमयीं कृत्वा पश्येद्ब्रह्ममयं जगत् ।

Dṛṣṭim jñānamayīm kṛtvā paśyet brahmamayam jagat |

"Having filled one's sight with knowledge, one should see the world as consisting of *Brahman*."

(Aparokshanubhutih 116, quoted by Ramana Maharshi in Talk 311)

Nāmarūpa – Name and Form

An old Zen monk wrote the word 'mind' on the gate, on the window, and on the wall of his retreat. A visiting monk commented, "Surely the gate should have the word 'gate' written on it, the window should have the word 'window' on it, and the wall should have the word 'wall' on it." A third monk, however, said, "Ha! Surely, all three, gate, window and wall, appear without recourse to labelling."

A visitor said: "'The Supreme Spirit (*Brahman*) is Real. The world (*jagat*) is illusion,' is the stock phrase of Sri Sankaracharya. Yet others say, 'The world is reality'. Which is true?"

Ramana Maharshi: "Both statements are true. They refer to different stages of development and are spoken from different points of view. The aspirant (*abhyasi*) starts with the definition, that which is real exists always; then he eliminates the world as unreal because it is changing. It cannot be real; 'not this, not this!' The seeker ultimately reaches the Self and there finds unity as the prevailing note. Then, that which was originally rejected as being unreal is found to be a part of the unity. Being absorbed in the Reality, the world also is Real.'" (Talk 33)

"There is no name, no form ... Name is however needed for *vyavahara* (empirical life)." (Talk 290)

Basho's Staff

Master Bashō said to his disciples, "If you have the staff, I will give it to you. If you have no staff, I will take it away from you!"

Ramana Maharshi said, “There is no gaining of anything new. All that is required is to rid the Self of ignorance. This ignorance is the identification of the Self with the non-Self.” (Talk 125)

This Mind is not Buddha.

When asked, “What is Buddha?” Bashō replied, “This mind is not Buddha.”

When asked again, “What is Buddha?” This time, Bashō replied, “This mind is Buddha.”

What mind?

“The sea is not aware of its wave. Similarly the Self is not aware of its ego.” (Talk 47)

“If the enquiry is made whether mind exists, it will be found that mind does not exist. That is control of mind. Otherwise, if the mind is taken to exist and one seeks to control it, it amounts to mind controlling the mind, just like a thief turning out to be a policeman to catch the thief, i.e., himself. Mind persists in that way alone, but eludes itself.” (Talk 43)

Ryokan's Moon

One night an opportunist thief wandered into Ryōkan's secluded but unlocked hut. Ryokan, while appearing to be sound asleep, watched the thief from his bed. Having searched and found nothing of value, the thief removed the single blanket which Ryokan used to fend off the autumn cold. Ryokan lay motionless. The thief took flight with the old blanket. Ryokan shivered and rose from his bed. At this very moment the light of the full moon broke through the clouds. Ryokan said, “Oh! He left it behind. What a shame! If only he could have seen this enchanting moon.”

Ramana Maharshi tells a story about King *Janaka*, in Talk 328, who said: “I have now found the robber (namely the mind) who has been robbing me of my ‘I’-ness. I will instantly kill this thief.” The perturbation owing to thoughts appears to rob the Self of its peace. The perturbation is the mind. When that ceases the mind is said to take flight. The Self remains as the undisturbed substratum.”

Blowing in the Mind

Huineng, the sixth patriarch, overheard two monks arguing about a flag in the courtyard. The first declared, “The flag is moving.” The other disagreed and said, “No, it is the wind that is moving.” Huineng immediately countered, “Neither wind nor flag is moving. It is mind that is moving.”

“Elimination of *drisya* [the seen] means elimination of separate identities of the subject and object. The object is unreal. All *drisya* (including ego) is the object. Eliminating the unreal, the Reality survives.” (Talk 25)

Eagerness to Practice

A monk approached Zen Master Yakusan with a problem. Master Yakusan told him to wait until the evening session.

At the end of the evening session, Master Yakusan said, "will the monk who approached me, earlier today, regarding a problem with practice, come forward.” As soon as the monk came forward Yakusan barged past him, without a word, and retired to his room.

Zen like *vichara* deals in immediacy.

Eagerness to practice... “must be equal to that of a man kept under water trying to rise up to the surface for his life.” (Talk 28)

Waiting is not a valid option.

There is no Posture like *siddha asana.*

"Of the different postures [in Yoga], eighty-four are the main ones. Of these, again, four, viz., *simha*, *bhadra*, *padma*, and *siddha* are said to be excellent. Of these too, it is only *siddha*, that is the most excellent. Thus the yoga texts declare." (from Ramana's "Self Enquiry")

When a Muslim visitor asked Bhagavan about *asana*, he replied that "abidance in God is the only true posture." (Talk 234)

On another occasion, he said "*nididhyasana* (one-pointedness of the mind) is the best." (Talk 557)

The one-pointed mind focussed by *vichara* (Self Enquiry) is indeed pure abidance in the Self.

When the ego rises up, confusion ensues and the world of differentiated objects is taken to be real, ego goes off searching for the best asana. In truth, only one is the centre (heart) of all and forms the basis for all – the seat upon which all else abides, including the multitude of *asanas*. This is *siddhāsana*.

Action – Reaction

All action happens as a reaction. Mind acknowledges this after the fact.

The supreme Yoga

"Fixing the mind on the mind is the Supreme Yoga."

(Uddhava Gita, Ch. 18, v. 46, last line)

Omkāra

"Everything, in the three worlds, moving and fixed, arises from *omkāra*."

(Dhyānabindu Upaniṣad, v. 16)

Patanjali's first and second Sutras

1. atha yoganusasanam – "Now, the principle of yoga"

2. Yogascittavrittinirodhah – "Yoga is the art of keeping mindstuff in check."

"Now" in the first sutra means exactly that "NOW". i.e. Not To be attended to at some time in the future, after thinking about it. NOW is the time... and yet people put it off with their humming and hawing. Waiting is mindstuff. "Yoga" is the means and now is always the time.

Vichara and *bhakti*

Vichara is the highest flight of *Bhakti*.
Bhakti is the highest flight of *Vichara*.

Vichara

Vichara is a way of life. It has absolutely nothing to do with sitting still with a quiet mind.

The butterfly effect

Acrylic media on canvas, 2009

A flock of doves takes off in one geographic location and winds are affected in another on the other side of the world. The interconnectedness of everything. 'I' pops up and everything becomes beholding to its sway.

Innateness

To ignore diversity is not enlightenment. To cling to the world is not enlightenment. Such acts prevent innateness.

Vichara Fodder

The idea 'non-duality' is only valid as opposition to 'duality'. Both are vichara fodder, no more no less.

Survival of the self

Survival of self, the ego, is, in itself, a fiction. Reflected light cannot radiate without the benefit of the source of that light.

Leap of faith

Belief

Belief is the final resort of those who have given up the search.

“Belief is mere acceptance. Faith is belief with reasoning. Belief is blind. Because one says something, the other simply believes. And so the latter is gullible.” (Swami Atulananda, Atman Alone Abides, February 7, 1961)

Without the Heart of a *Jnani*

If you take on the attitude of the *jnani* without the Heart of a jnani your words and actions will be anathema.

Vichara as innate Enquiry

All practice is simply a rehearsal for that eternal, innate and spontaneous enquiry.

Saguna, Nirguna

The *saguna* state begins with *sphurana* and becomes "I am" and then the world. "Who am I?" reverses the polarity. "Who am I?" leads one to *nirguna's* door but who dares knock!

Halting Mindstuff

To halt mindstuff, Self Enquiry (vichara) is employed. Self Enquiry is becoming aware of aberrant thought and asking to whom it appears. This is it. Anything more is mindstuff. In this method, awareness of the absurdity of thought becomes heightened and, through practice, Self Enquiry cuts in more and more often.

Ego Delay

Delay is the not so subtle ploy of the ego.

Truth trumps Falsehood

satyam eva jayate nAnritam

"Truth alone triumphs, never falsehood."

(Mundaka Upanisad, 3.6)

In Truth, there can be no competition. Truth is immediate and insurmountable.

In Ignorance

In ignorance, ego-self assumes a stance separate from everything else. Then, in error, looks at, and acts upon, this falsely perceived separate universe.

Obsessing Mind

It is pointless to obsess over the words of others while the obsessing mind remains unknown.

Discriminate

While one might keep in mind what has been read and heard one should discriminate constantly.

Spirituality is *vichara.*

spirituality is *vichara*
no more
no less

No self

There is no self to be realised. That is the sum and substance of your search.

Ever alone

Alone, In Bliss, Uncontaminated.

Grasping

Other than, "Don't grasp for that which is real," is there anything else to say?

Abandoning all Actions

samnyasya sarvakarmAni bhavabandhavimuktaye
yatyatAm paDNitair dhIrair AtmAbhyAsa upasthitaih /10/

“Abandoning all actions in order to break free from the bond of birth and death, abidance in the Self is attained by the courageous wise man.”

(Vivekacudamani)

Philosophical Discussions

Philosophical discussions can be fun but they have nothing to do with actual practice and yet some people use them instead of practice.

Simple *vichara*

I am not entirely sure why people put so much faith in philosophical books about which they know very little and about whose author[s] there may be more or less dubiety. It would appear that if it is old the assumption follows that it is genuine. However, it seems that the older a book is the more likely it is that it has been played with, interpolated, manipulated [directly or through commentary], abused, used, exaggerated, compounded, expounded [in diverse and extraordinary ways, to prove this *vada* or that], embellished and relished by some while reviled by others.

Of course, that is not to say that they might not be enjoyable to read. Personally I love to read Sanskrit books in the original. To explore the use of language, to thrill at the symbology, to observe the inconsistencies, to wonder at the word flow. And I find great worth in exploring the words and ideas of 18th century Scottish philosophers and others.

But this, in my opinion, is neither necessary nor of any real use in the simple practice of *vichara* once the technique is known.

No one succeeds without Effort.

I find the misuse of this 'quotation' from Ramana Maharshi rather amusing. Life/motivational coaches, money gurus and various other self-help, business gurus and hawkers of get rich quick schemes use it. It appears regularly on Twitter. - "No one succeeds without effort...Those who succeed owe their success to their perseverance."

Without the all-important missing [...] portion the real meaning, in the context of *vichara*, is lost.

In context control of the rebellious mind is evoked rather than a dosing of egotistic self-help. The actual complete quotation, taken from Talk 398, is as follows – "No one succeeds without effort. Mind control is not one's birthright. The successful few owe their success to their perseverance."

That which cannot be seen, cannot be grasped

"That which cannot be seen, cannot be grasped,
Without colour, sight or hearing,
Without hands or feet,
That which is eternal, present everywhere,
The subtlest of the subtle, imperishable,
The source of all beings...
That... the wise fully behold."

(Mundaka Upanishad, 1.6)

Blind Attachment

Whilst the comfort found in belonging to a like-minded group of people can be irresistible (and informative), without due diligence, this comfort can deteriorate into blind attachment.

Direct Experience

What is the point in reading the ponderous leavings of others, settling one doubt only to find numerous more arising to replace it. You must make use of direct experience only.

"Only the enquiry into the Self can be of use." (Ramana Maharshi)

Vichara has a long Pedigree.

Vichara is a practice which has a long, long pedigree. I recently posted [elsewhere] a translation from Bhagavata Purana which refers directly to the process of *vichara* and calls it the Highest Yoga. The idea that one must be either a Ramana *bhakta* or Arunachala *bhakta*, to perform *vichara* correctly, which is an impression given by some, is, self evidently, spurious, to say the least. *Vichara* is not bound to person, company, religion, time or place. Clearly *bhaktas* can get a little carried away with their *bhakti* at times. It is an immature stage of the *bhakti* process which all *bhaktas* must go through. However, Maharshi did revive the practice and bring it back into correct usage. we must be ever grateful for this instruction. In that, undoubtedly he is the *vichara avatara*.

Golden Snitch of Mindstuff

As the game of Quidditch ends when the Seeker, aided by his/her skill in flying a broomstick, catches hold of the Golden Snitch, so the game of Mindstuff ends when the vicArajNa, by means of his/her skill in Self-enquiry, catches hold of the "I"-thought.

[Quidditch – see Harry Potter]

Any Kind of Meditation is good.

The *jnana* method is said to be *vichara* (enquiry). That is nothing but 'supreme devotion' (*parabhakti*). The difference is in words only.

You think that *bhakti* is meditation on the Supreme Being. So long as there is *vibhakti* (the sense of separateness), *bhakti* (reunion) is sought. The process will lead to the ultimate goal as is said in Srimad Bhagavad Gita 7. 16,17:

arto jignasuh artarthi jnani cha Bharatarshabha
tesham jnani nityayukta ekabhaktir visishyate

"(Four types of virtuous men worship Me...) the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth, and the *jnani*, O most excellent of the *Bharatas*. Of them, the *jnani*, eternally engaged in single minded devotion, excels"

"Any kind of meditation is good. But if the sense of separateness is lost and the object of meditation or the subject who meditates is alone left behind without anything else to know, it is *jnana*. *Jnana* is said to be *ekabhakt* (single minded devotion). The *jnani* is the finality because he has become the Self and there is nothing more to do. He is also perfect and so fearless, dwitiyat vai bhayam bhavati -- only the existence of a second gives rise to fear. This is *mukti*. It is also *bhakti*." (from Talk 650)

Those who cling to the Words of Gurus

Those who simply cling to the words of gurus, whether living or dead, have killed the Quest. If words are blindly accepted without testing by questing the Original Source, the graveyard will be frequented with inordinate frequency.

The View as to who is and who is not Self-realized

The view as to who is and who is not Self-realized is a judgement in relativism. From the point of view of the *jnani* there is no *ajnana*. From the point of view of the ajnani there might be judgements as to who is or who is not. Let's all just take to *atma vichara* rather than make such spurious judgements.

Om namah Sivaya

I bow down to that three-eyed Lord *Siva*, who is full of sweet fragrance, who nourishes the human beings. May He free me from the bondage of *Samsara* and death, just as a ripe cucumber fruit is separated from the creeper. May I be**fixed in Immortality!**

Spontaneous Action

So long as egoity lasts *prayatna* (effort) is necessary. When egoity ceases to be, actions become spontaneous.

A Meeting with a quiet Swami

A young *mumukshu* (aspirant) began to follow the path of Yoga. He was in a great hurry to attain enlightenment and set deadline after deadline by which time he should reach his goal. He made a point of meeting various teachers whenever they visited his area, in order to learn the methods and signposts of achievement After many, many years his meditation had become very deep, in fact, he became a great adept of meditation and was able to enter *nirvikalpa samadhi* at will. He had long abandoned the many wondrous experiences, including visions, but enlightenment still evaded him. Deadlines came and went. More were set. All the signs were there... but always with more to come. Despair became his constant companion.

At this point, fortuitously, he met a quiet Swami. The *mumukshu* approached the Swami and said, “I have been following the path of Yoga for many years. I have experienced many wondrous things, yet still I have not attained enlightenment. Please point me towards one who has himself attained, and can show me, the Self.” The Swami quietly replied, “This is the 64000 dollar question. If you find one before me, please let me know. You are rushing

along your chosen path looking for signs, expecting that enlightenment is somewhere ahead of you. Are you sure you are heading in the right direction? Perhaps, after all, you should simply stop and turn around."

Like the Moonlight in Daylight

"The mind of the knower, abiding in the Heart, is merged in the consciousness of the Heart like the moonlight in daylight." (Ramana Maharshi)

Commentary

There is a world of difference between a Heart based life and the mind based one. For those whose mind is dead, in the sense that the latent tendencies are destroyed, only the form of the mind is there. It is rid of its content.

Desteny

Your desteny is Truth.

Initiation and *upadesa*

"Mrs Manager reports: 'Sri Sai Baba's methods of giving spiritual help were not the usual ones. He gave no mantra [incantation] or *upadesa*. He never spoke of yoga, *pranayama* or *kundalini*. But when anything went wrong with anyone who was following any such *marga* [path] he would come to Sai Baba and be helped.'

Nevertheless, he made it clear to his devotees that there was no need for them to go elsewhere in search of *upadesa*. Few even considered the question. His spiritual support was too potent and evident. H. V. Sathe has said: 'Baba never gave *upadesa* or initiation to anyone, so I did not ask him. On several occasions I was invited to obtain *upadesa* from someone else. On every such occasion I referred the question to Sai Baba and he gave a negative reply.' This is strongly reminiscent of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi who also did not give initiation and *upadesa* as usually understood and yet, when asked by a devotee whether it was necessary to seek elsewhere, replied that it was not." (from 'The Incredible Sai Baba', Arthur Osborne, p. 105-106)

The accepted view, in traditional Yoga and *Vedanta* circles, is that formal initiation, normally from one who is a part of a *bona fide parampara* (suc-

cession) unbroken down to the *Adiguru* (the original teacher), is a necessary prerequisite to advancement on the spiritual path. Does this in turn mean that we must know the teacher's teacher and the teacher's teacher's teacher, ad infinitum? Who is this *Adiguru*? Does each sect have its own? Know this and know the secret of all the Yogas.

Truth is One.

Dadaji said, "Just do your work, remember Him and leave everything to Him." This is the way to Truth. And in this way, Truth is your Existence and Truth manifests Itself.

Truth is One.
Almighty is One.
Humanity is One.
Religion is One.
Language is One.
(Dadaji)

The human Condition

The human condition occurs when one individuates and sees oneself as separate from *Brahman* (the Self). Man's struggle for release is thwarted so long as he claims birth, death, and reincarnation, within the limits of waking, dream and dreamless sleep as his own.

'I am', the blissful Self, is the natural experience which transcends ego, mind, intellect and senses. I exist as the Self of the universe, the universe exists in Me. **"I am the Self, dwelling in the Heart of all beings, I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings."** (Bhagavad Gita, 10.20)

***So'ham* (I am …)**

so'ham
so I am
so'ham
so I am
so'ham
so I am
Every breath...every heartbeat confirms and reaffirms this unity.

Any Road

“When you don't know where you're going, any road can take you there.”
(George Harrison)

The 'Brainwashed' album is heard around the house most days...as is all of George's music.

“But oh Lord we've got to fight
With the thoughts in the head with the dark and the light
No use to stop and stare
And if you don't know where you're going
Any road will take you there.”

(from 'Any Road', the Brainwashed Album; George Harrison, 2002)

For the *adhikAri*

It has been said that for the *adhikArI* the procedure is threefold:

sravana - listening to the teachings
manana - thinking over what has been heard
nididhyAsana - uninterrupted contemplation

Guru’s *ajnana*

jnAna, being beyond mind and speech, is merely pointed to, by guru's *ajnAna*. As one thorn removes another thorn,... so guru's *ajnAna* removes the *Sishya's* cover of *ajnAna*... leaving *jnAna*, pristine as always, in its place. Don't get hung up on the language or it'll tie you in knots.

note: Guru's *ajnAna* is not an unwanted thorn embedded in a tender place, but a thorn picked up as a tool and laid down again, as, and when, necessary.

Don't have a single Thought.

Holding onto only the good things, while rejecting only the bad, is simply mindstuff. Contemplating the Self while rejecting the not-self is mere folly. All of these are in the province of contrivance. They are externalisations by another name. This world is created by but a single thought. This is the root

of all birth and death. This is the source of mindstuff. Don't have a single thought and you'll get rid of the root of birth and death.

The Three Pillars of When,
acrylic media on canvas, March 2010

Know that one Self alone.

"Know that one Self alone,
on which are woven heaven and earth
and all things in between,
along with mind and life breath.
Abandon common words
[mere signs of name and form].
This is the bridge to the immortal."
(Mandukya Upanishad, 2.2.5)

The Paradox

hAtumicchati samsAram rAgI duhkhajihAsayA |
vItarAgo hi nirduhkhastasminnapi na khidyati ||

(Ashtavakra Samhita, 16.9)

One who is swayed by desire, in order to avoid suffering, desires to renounce the world (and its rounds of births and deaths). One who is free from desire is indeed free from suffering and is not troubled, even in the midst of the world.

For whom is birth? For whom is death?
Who is untroubled in the midst of the world?

The Knot in the Heart is cut.

bhidyate hrdayagranthiS chidyante sarvasamSayAh |
kshIyante cAsya karmANi drshTa evAtmanISvare ||

"The knot in the Heart is cut, all doubts are dispelled and the causal chains are terminated, when the Lord is recognised within oneself."

(Bhagavatam, 1.2.21)

When shall I be free?

When 'I' shall cease to be.

Without a second

sadeva somyedamagra AsId
ekamevAdvitIyam |

"In the beginning, this was simple Existence alone.
One only, without a second."

(Chandogya Upanishad, 6.2.1)

Choice

"Only he, whom he chooses, can grasp him.
For him this Self is revealed as his very own."

(cf. Mundaka & Katha Upanisads)

Vichara

Vichara is the most intense activity of the entire mind to keep itself poised in pure Self-awareness

No Mind, no Body

"This threefold mindstuff modification, which has become attached to you, is an illusion which appears in the interim state alone but not at the beginning nor at the end. When birth, life and death befall this (body and mind), what is that to you? That which begins and ends with non-existence is indeed just that in the middle." (Bhagavata Purana, 11.19.07)

In the first section of the text it says "...trivedho vikaro..." – "threefold modification of mind". In the second section it talks about birth etc. Birth, life, death is a threefold modification.

What modification takes place daily? The arising of mind, the apparent existence of mind, the dissolution of mind – birth, individuated existence (i.e. the illusion), death.

"Your mind is the cycle of births and deaths (*samsara*)." (Talk 31)

"If a man considers he is born he cannot avoid the fear of death. Let him find out if he has been born or if the Self has any birth. He will discover that the Self always exists, that the body which is born resolves itself into thought and that the emergence of thought is the root of all mischief. Find wherefrom thoughts emerge. Then you will abide in the ever-present inmost Self and be free from the idea of birth or the fear of death." (Talk 80)

Direct *upadesa* to Madhavi Ammal

"I adore *Guha* the Dweller in the Cave of the Heart, the Son of the Protector of the Universe, the Pure Light of Awareness beyond thought, the Wielder of the weapon of *Jnana Sakti* and the Remover of the ignorance of blemishless devotees." (From The Silent Power: Ramana Reminiscences XVI)

Ramana Maharshi wrote this sloka on a piece of paper and handed it to Srimati Madhavi Ammal, saying "You can make use of it in meditation."

Vichara and *bhakti* are identical.

Ramana said that while a few find *vichara* practicable perhaps for others *Bhakti* is better. I feel that the misguided nature of some of the overtly philosophical pronouncements on enquiry are the main problem. In truth *Bhakti*

and *vichara* are identical. The process is simple and devoid of philosophical content.

[…] I occasionally (thankfully very occasionally) get sent links and articles which, in the main, seem to suggest that actual practice of Ramana's teaching has diminished and worship of him has taken its place. The core teaching that the one who worships (or does anything for that matter) must be enquired into, for now, seems to have lost impetus. Ego prefers to enhance its validity in worship.

The Seed will sprout.

"Bhagavan had no desire to argue anything or to prove anything to anyone. If people were not ready to accept His teaching, He would never try to force His views upon them. He left people free to believe what they wanted to believe." (Sri Balaram Reddy).

This seems a good course to take. People come to Him for many reasons, in many ways. Depending on the soil on which the seed is sown, the time to sprout and grow will vary, but rest assured is always sprouts.

Broadening of Vision

Passion, anger, greed, attachment, pride – these are the assailants which inevitable come along with human condition, i.e. identifying with that finite bit of Reality which one calls oneself. Broadening of vision is necessary – love, compassion, self-sacrifice, humility, sympathy (and empathy) bring this about. Then society develops a sense of brotherhood (or sisterhood). Turning towards the Self through *jnana*, *bhakti*, or *karma* (or, more correctly, a combination of these) is the solution.

Dazzling Sun

"Dazzling Sun
that swallowest up the universe in Thy rays,
with Thy light open the lotus of my heart
I pray, O Arunachala!"

(Akshara Mana Malai, 27)

With the splendour of ten of millions of suns and the cooling rays of ten of millions of moons.
Where else can one look?
Where else need one look?

This Awareness is timeless.

Turning within to the source of the 'I' requires no set time. Indeed, why ander to the trap of time? This awareness is… timeless.

Jnani/ajnani

Jnani… ajnani… really only relative terms. The *jnani* sees no *ajnanis*. The *ajnani* sees only *ajnanis* (even when he sees a *jnani*). One is Truth, the other is just relative concept.

Sakti and *Sakta*

The truth is that *Sakti* cannot exist independently of *Sakta*. It is *Sakta* which controls potential. And it is the *Vicharin* alone, who understand this Truth. Ultimately all is dependent on the Self.

The transitional 'I'

Everything is dependent on the Self. The Self is never dependent on anything. The limited sense of 'I' (ego-I), which is born upon awakening and dies in deep sleep, is the entity which makes differentiation. Behind this 'I' there is another eternal 'I' which is the substratum upon which the modes of sleep, dream and waking depend. In Talk 314, Bhagavan says that when the 'I' evolves each day, there is a point of transition when 'I' arises without predicate. This is before the arising of the world as something apart. This transitional 'I' which arises from sleep comes out as pure, unadulterated consciousness. In reality, this 'I' is non-different from the Self.

Constant Vigilance

"In whatever direction the restless, unsteady mind wanders,
Having checked it from that, it should be brought under the sway
of the Self alone." (Bhagavad Gita, 6.26)

This verse emphasises the need for constant vigilance and is an important corollary to the previous verse.[1] The fact that tranquility is realised little by little, or step by step (as mentioned in the previous verse), must not be used as an excuse to relax or take it easy until some future date. The fickleness of the mind is gradually overcome by this constant vigil.

Churning the Mind

"*Atmanusandhana* [thinking constantly of the Self] has been likened to churning the curd to draw forth butter, the mind being compared to the churning rod, the heart to the curd and the practice of constancy in the Self to the process of churning." (Talk 349)

The analogy refers to churning cream to make butter. i.e. acting on one thing to reveal something else. The process of *vichara* is said to reverse the outward flow of consciousness along the *nadis* and cause them to flow into the Heart.

Aham

As mentioned Ramana's description of '*aham*' is "The first letter in Sanskrit 'A' and the last letter 'Ha' and '*Aham*' thus includes everything from beginning to end." This is similar to the way 'aum' is described by some – 'a' pronounced with open mouth, unobstructed, then 'u' as mouth begins to close and finally 'm' with closed lips. All potential sounds or articulations therefore included.

Aham sphurana

The form of the Self is *aham sphurana*. Whenever we talk of "form", we talk from the dualistic standpoint of the ego. This is the convention of language which is naturally dualistic. Therefore, while the Self is eternal "*arupa*" [without form], for the individual, this can never be more than a thesis. This thesis must be proved by the practice of *vichara*. With practice,

[1] "Slowly and steadily, with conviction in the intellect, the mind will become fixed in God [Self] alone, and will think of nothing else." (Bhagavad Gita 6.25, translation: https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/6/verse/24-25/)

aham sphurana is the harbinger of the pure Self felt by the ego. Even this *sphurana* must go for Self to blaze forth unfettered.

***

Bhagavan gives [in a letter to Ganapati Muni] a description of the state in which the 'I' feeling clings to and identifies with the Self:

"**When the mind, the distinctive knowledge which rises from the non-distinctive state of 'I' clings to and identifies with the Self, it is called true knowledge. It may also be called 'knowledge which is *the movement of the mind in the form of the Self*' or 'knowledge in an unbroken form'. The state in which this pure *sattvic* mind shines clinging to the Self is called '*aham–sphurana*'.**"

In this passage Sri Bhagavan is describing the state where the 'I'-feeling alone remains and clings to the Self. This state is not the final state of Realisation, for in this state there is still the dualistic feeling that there is an 'I' which is clinging to the Self. Sri Bhagavan calls this state the '*aham–sphurana*' and it may be described as the subjective experience of the feeling of 'I' which manifests when the mind is quiet and still. In the next section of the letter Sri Bhagavan gives a detailed description of the *aham–sphurana* and shows how it is related to the Self:

"This *sphurana* cannot remain independently apart from the reality, but it is the correct sign which indicates the following direct experience of that reality. The source to which this *sphurana* clings alone is called the reality or pure consciousness."

The Nature of Thoughts

Misunderstanding about the nature of thought is a recurring problem. The following quote from Ramana sometimes helps. It is certainly the experience here. It explains how thought functions for the *jnani*.

"*Vritti* is of short duration, it is qualified, directed consciousness; or absolute consciousness broken up by cognition of thoughts, senses, etc. *Vritti* is the function of the mind, whereas the continuous consciousness transcends the mind. This is the natural, primal state of the *Jnani* or the liberated being.

That is unbroken experience. It asserts itself when relative consciousness subsides. *Aham vritti* ('I-thought') is broken, *Aham sphurana* (the light of 'I-I') is unbroken, continuous. After the thoughts subside, the light shines forth." (Talk 307)

No Philosophizing needed

Much of the confusion also comes from a teacher misunderstanding unfamiliar cultural and religious concepts and trying to transpose those ideas into their own cultural mores (this happens in India every bit as much as elsewhere) to make them more easily acceptable.

However, Ramana's teaching is and has always been straightforward. Perhaps I was just lucky initially to see the simple core description of *vichara* in 1968, in a small yoga book. Devoid of religious and philosophical complication, it stuck with me through the years (despite my becoming very interested, obsessed in Indian religion and philosophy). Later, Ramana's Talks, biographies, etc. confirmed the simplicity but also made clear that various philosophical elements had been introduced, after his understanding, when Palaniswami, realising Ramana could read, brought various *Vedanta* books for Ramana to explain in light of his experience. Palaniswami was very interested in *Vedanta*.

Therefore philosophy is unnecessary. The method, stripped of philosophy, as you know, is simple - A South Indian Sage advised, "Pursue the enquiry "Who am I?" relentlessly! Seek out the root of your personality! Find out wherefrom the I-thought arises! Turn the mind within. With practice, the current of thoughts will slow down and an unerring intuition will be felt. Yield to that intuition, let your thinking stop, and it will pull you to the goal.

No philosophising (speculation) needed. No cultural references. It is simply a case of enquiring without expectation. It sits happily with practitioners of any philosophy or religion. It eliminates the need for such things. However, I still managed to search here, there and everywhere, just for the fun of it. Although to be fair that was more to do with a fascination with the Sanskrit language. Of course, the two did manage to get together when I discovered numerous early references to *vichara*.

Cohen, who suffered Alzheimer

[To understand the following, see Ganesan's report on Cohen in 'Moment Remembered', p. 122 f: "I [Ganesan] had to be away from the Ashram for nearly two months and when I returned I saw Sri Cohen in a much worse condition and confined to a wheel chair. His talk was no longer coherent. […] I cried on seeing his pathetic condition and told him: 'Mr. Cohen! You are the most intelligent *sadhak* I have met. Why are you talking so incoherently`' He then adjusted himself and squarely looked at my face and said: 'When the body becomes old, you lose control over it. And so over the mind also. But you are not the body and you are not the mind! So, don't give any importance to how the body or the mind behaves. They are not 'me'" I was astonished when he said that since just a few minutes back he was talking sheer nonsense" Then I asked him 'If you are not the mind nor the body, who is speaking to me? Who are you? In which state are you, now?' 'I am pure spirit, witnessing what takes place through the body and mind. I have nothing to do with them. I am in the presence of my Master: Guru Ramana, enjoying His benign and blissful presence! I am pure *ananda*!' As he uttered these words I saw a different Mr. Cohen, the one we had known for years with all his brightness and serenity. After some time, he again started talking incoherently. It was a great revelation, a clinical laboratory demonstration of the fact 'I-am-not-the-body-mind!"]

Indeed, as I may have mentioned before, I enjoy Cohen's writings. I can empathise much more with him having experienced brain problems here. The episode recorded by Ganesan in 'Moments Remembered' became a reality here, briefly. The witness was never affected even as all around were concerned about the situation.[1] However, that Cohen seems to have suffered from alzheimer's disease which caused such disruption to his physical daily life and yet maintained inner composure confirms the efficacy of *Vichara* practice. It is the key. He was a true *Jnani*.

Anything by Cohen is excellent. There is a certain common sense to his writing and interviews. The passage about his dementia is truly inspiring and

[1] Due to his illness, Miles repeatedly suffered from memory loss and speech problems.

reveals a truth about Sel/self that people seem to either miss, dismiss or see as unimportant. In fact, it is an enormous clue to any serious *vicharin*.

Death and Fear of Death

Death can only ever be theoretical. It can never be experienced. The very one who would die, if he should die, is no longer there to experience it. Suffering, however, can be experienced, because the one who would suffer is there to experience it.

Fear of death is a cause of suffering but fear of death is not death itself. It is a symptom of ego. One stresses about it because death is the ultimate unknown.

Fear of pain, both mental and physical, is a cause of suffering and this is a result of the strong self-protection strategy of the individual. We want to avoid pain and suffering. Very sensible. In such things *vichara* is the key and fear is a doorway.

In many years of discussing this with people I have come to realise that it is common for people to ask the questions but few activate the practical advice. It remains theoretical.

The only solution is *vichara*. All else is ego based. Proper practice helps to relinquish the hold fear has. Without such training the mind can run riot.

I should add that to me this is not theoretical. While I have no fear of death, I am not that keen on pain. Which is unfortunate because there seems to be a fair bit of it sent this way.

Death is an everyday Experience

Death is an everyday experience. Indeed "Om vacadbhuve namah" (i surrender to that place of being from whence the word arises) is an excellent pointer.

I posted a quotation from Swami Vivekananda today which I feel is most pertinent. "When discrimination comes and man finds there are not two but one, he finds that he is himself this universe."

This is it in a nutshell. This is always the case. It is not that any change must happen other than the realisation that ego self is a fiction, an interloper.

Every night in deep sleep ego self succumbs to the natural state. "Are you born now? Why do you think of other births? The fact is that there is neither birth nor death. Let him who is born think of death and palliatives therefore." (Ramana Maharshi in Talk 17).

The Universe is uncreated, or self-existent, neither beginning or ending. *Brahman* is the universe. *Brahman* comes from the Sanskrit root "bRh" to expand, increase, etc. i.e. it is the eternal Big Bang. There is no need to posit a spiritual versus material situation. There is just "is".

[…] The above is only a brief note. It has been pointed out to me that Ramana seems to talk about death in contradictory ways. Indeed it seems that way but in truth he tends to answer the questioner in terms of their understanding while at the same time pointing to the teaching of *vichara* which negates any theoretical answer and leaves one who truly discriminates in no doubt as to Truth. Vivekananda's quotation above is, by far, one of the simplest explanations. It is an explanation which is not dependent on any sectarian ideas. It is the way I independently came to understand things way back then. Imagine the wonderful surprise when I discovered a similar statement from Vivekananda who seemed to be a lover of philosophising and lecturing.

[…] The difficulty we have is differentiating between the relative and the absolute. This post ties in well with Swami Vivekanda's post: "**he finds that he is himself this universe.**" This relative vs. absolute point was hammered home to me by Swami Bhavyananda[1] back in the late 80s. For this I am ever grateful. I must have mentioned this before. I asked him the same question I asked everyone at that time. "How does one meet someone who is enlightened?" He was not fooled and replied, "You have asked the $60,000 question. If you find one before me, please let me know!" This was a Zen style revelation to me. I should add that Swamiji knew I was reading a lot of Zen at the time.

[1] Swami Bhavyananda was the head of the Ramakrishna Math in London. He had met Ramana Maharshi. Miles also referred to the following interview with him: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xadn93wZ4lQ

The relative/absolute quandary is the death problem if only we could overcome the mind's well loved explanations of this, that and everything else. Oh, yes, we can! Indeed, as always it comes back to *atma vichara*.

Resistance of Death

I have come across this resistance to death over the years with regard to family and friends and of course in various conversations about *ajatavada*. A theoretical understanding might satisfy the ego in life but unless one has developed firm practice theory will come to nought in the end. For that, *vichara* is essential. It is more important than theory.

Experience shows that ego can be extremely forceful in its fight for survival. Rather than surrender at the end it reiterates its independent existence. Mature *vichara*, toned by practice, at this time, subdues ego. As ego claims ownership of this, that and everything else and demands continuance, *vichara* patiently eliminates such claims one by one.

The last Thought at the Time of Death

It matters little if one forgets [*vichara*] because as the practice matures remembrance becomes ever easier. Remembrance is itself Grace. It is said that one’s last thought at the time of death are very important. Bhagavan has taken great pains to help devotees at this time. For one who is constant in Self enquiry, there is no worry.

Short Poems

Home

Fire of *Vichara*

Transmuting lead into gold,
Forged in the fire of Vichara,
Deep ... In the cave of the Heart.

Alchemists one and all,
Having taken refuge in Him,
Multiplicity melts.

The Dance of Existence

Dance the eternal dance of the Self.
In essence, the rhythm of existence
Felt as the *sphurana* 'I-I'.

Bashō's Frog

Ancient pool,
A frog jumps in,
(the sound of splashing water)
Basho

Ego sinks,
into the Self.
Who hears the sound?
MWright

We are the Self

We *ARE* the Self, it alone is,
ignorance causes us to imagine
that we have not realised it.

Take up the Means,
reach the Goal.

Mind *Dharma*

Dharma comes from mind
Mind comes from *dharma*
Relative in the absolute
Absolute in the relative.

Brain Fades

Brain fades,
Chattering mind relents.
An inadvertent bonus.

Translations with Comments

Essence of Instruction (Upadesa Saram)

The Pine Forest Revisited

Bindu – Essence

Preface

There is an old legend about the *Rishis* (wise men) who lived in a pine forest together with their wives. They practiced the ritual rites of the Karma Kanda, a book of the Vedas. As a result of their practices, they attained supernatural powers and, in this way, they expected to gain liberation. But, in truth, their practices bolstered the arrogance of their egos. At this point, *Siva* appeared

on the scene and taught them a painful lesson which showed the absurdity of their puffed-up attitudes. Having been humbled the *Rishis* became open for instruction. *Siva* taught them, in his mercy, the correct way to attain the natural state of the Self.

The Tamil-poet Muruganar, a well-respected devotee of Ramana Maharshi, wanted to write a hundred verses about this legend. But when he completed 70 verses he could not proceed and requested that Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi take over that part of the story which dealt with *Siva's* teaching to the *Rishis*. Sri Ramana wrote the missing 30 verses in Tamil as Upadesa Undiyar, which he later translated into Sanskrit as Upadesa Saram ("nectar or essence of instruction").

These 30 verses are the quintessence of Sri Ramana's teaching. In their significance they are comparable to the old *Upanishads*. During the lifetime of Ramana, they were recited daily in the hall in his presence. This habit continues down to today at Ramanashram.

Introduction to Upadesa Saram

Six Verses by Muruganar

1. The *Rishis* who were doing tapas in dAruvanam went astray because of their *pUrva karmA*.

2. Steeped in ignorance with deceitful pride, they believed that there is no God other than *karmA*.

In the Heart-lotus of each and every one, Bhagavan dances the eternal dance of the Self. This, in essence, is the rhythm of existence; felt as the *sphurana* 'I-I', or … Being. At times one might lose sight of this simple fact. And, when this happens, the illusion of free-will will appear to take hold. Even the great *Rishis* of Darukavanam (The Pine Forest) were not exempt from the illusion of independence. Although they were extremely adept at the Karma Kanda or ritualistic section of the *Veda*, which deals with Yajnas (sacrificial rites) etc., and despite the intensity of their Vedic ritual and ceremonial, indeed, because of the performance of their Yajnas, their egos had become puffed up to a very great extent. The rituals had, in fact, become counter-productive because they merely provided fuel for the great fire of

pride that the *Rishis* had in their own egocentric abilities. They had become hooked on action and every attainment threw up the desire for a further bigger, better attainment. Things have not changed much since then … have they? The human condition continues to be enthralled with the shadows all the while oblivious to the all-important source of the light.

3. They realized the fruits of abusing God, the *kartA*, who ordains the fruits of *karma*. Their pride (arrogance) left them.

Having observed the misunderstandings of the *Rishis*, and in order to show them that *karma* was definitely not the means to an end, Lord *Siva* appeared in the forest hermitage in the guise of a religious mendicant, along with Lord *Vishnu*, who had taken, at the request of Lord *Siva*, the guise of a beautiful girl, named Mohini.

The disguised pair, mendicant monk and beautiful girl, wandered towards the centre of the busy hermitage. The *Rishis* were householders and lived with their wives. When the wives of the *Rishis* saw the Mendicant Siva, they at once fell in love with Him. The wives' hearts were captivated, their husbands were forgotten. At the same time, as soon as the *Rishis* laid eyes on Mohini, they became completely infatuated with Her. Everywhere She went they followed unable to control their senses. Despite their intense forest *tapas*, passion took hold of the *Rishis'* minds and this was soon joined by a fierce anger, when they observed the state of their wives. An anger which they vowed to unleash on the Mendicant (Lord *Siva*) using all the powers at their disposal. They began an enormous sacrificial fire, in a very deep pit, and performed all the appropriate mantras. In their pride they thought that they would easily defeat the impertinent Mendicant. They conjured up a fierce man-eating tiger which they sent after the Mendicant. He simply grabbed it and wrapped it around His waist. They conjured up a rogue elephant which immediately charged at the Mendicant. He took it in one hand and slung it over His shoulder as a cloak. Then they created poisonous snakes which the Mendicant took as belt, necklaces and amulets. Even a charmed trident went straight into the hand of the Mendicant. Weapon after weapon became an ornament of the Mendicant *Siva* and the *Rishis* of the Pine Forest fell down on their knees, then onto their fronts, exhausted physically and mentally, all passion, anger, greed, attachment and pride had fi-

nally subsided, and they beseeched the Mendicant to reveal His true Form that they might be instructed by such a great Sage. Their egoism no longer in the way they were at last open to instruction. Lord *Siva* revealed Himself.

4. When they prayed to Him to save them (in humility) *Siva* blessed them with karuNa filled eyes. This is *Siva's* upadESa.

It was at this point in the story that the great Tamil poet Muruganar approached Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and requested elucidation on the Instruction which had been given by Lord *Siva* to the *Rishis*. Bhagavan agreed and wrote the Instruction in 30 verses. Later the verses were translated into Telugu, Malayalam and, at the request of the great Sanskritist, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni, they were also translated into Sanskrit. This current work is a translation from the Sanskrit verses.

5. If one lives by this *sAram* of *Siva's upadESa*, all sorrows will disappear and joy will fill the heart.

This *upadesa* is indeed *Siva's Upadesa*, repeated once again by Him, at the request of His devotee, while living on the holy Mount Arunachala.

6. Hence, may the *sAram* of this *upadESa* fill our heart. May bliss swell; may sorrows be exhausted.

It has been said by some commentators on Upadesa Saram that the verses of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi are terse and difficult to understand because of 'cryptic style'. This is undoubtedly not the case. All comments made herein by the writer are but apposite notes and observations which have come out of conversations and close reading and which may aid in the Quest.

Thank you to the devotion of Sri Muruganar for giving impetus to these Upadesa Saram verses which reveal the essence of *Vedanta* as revealed through the direct, ever-radiant, Self-experience of the Sage of Arunachala.

Listen carefully to these verses, one by one, imbibe them slowly and deeply, as if the sweetest nectar.

jyotishAmapi tajjyotistamasah paramucyate /
jnAnam jneyam jnAnagamyam hrdi sarvasya vishThitam //

"Light of lights, beyond the darkness, He is called; true knowledge, that which is to be known, understood through knowledge, abiding in the Heart of all."

(Bhagavad Gita, 13.17)

"That which is the source of all, that in which all live, and that into which all finally merge, is the heart referred to [in verse 10 of Upadesa Saram]."
(Day by Day, 29-4-46)

Upadesa Saram

1.

karturAjnayA prApyatephalam /
karmakimparamkarmatajjaDam //

The fruit (of action) is ordained by the order of the Lord of Action (Creator). Is action supreme? (No!!) Action is inert.

Notes

Action, although a power of the Self, is, by itself, insentient, temporary, and powerless. As such, action is unable to bestow fruits now or at any time in the future. Action is dependent. It is not supreme. The '*kartr'* (Lord of Action), referred to in this verse, is the 'one who acts, spontaneously, of his own accord, without prompting by the ego' (i.e. the great non-Doer). It is the Lord alone, dwelling as the inner Self of all, who guides everything yet never acts. If you believe that you are the person, capable of acting independently, the chain of cause and effect, having been set in motion, becomes your reality. As the doer of action you become accountable for action and also the recipient of the fruits of that action. This misunderstanding of the true state of affairs results in the human condition. Ritual action (worship for appeasement) is of this sort.

In Talks, Yogi Ramiah questions Sri Ramana on the nature of action.

> Yogi Ramiah: "All actions take place owing to *Sakti*. How far does *Sakti* go? Can she effect anything without one's own effort?"

Maharshi: “The answer to the question depends on what *Purusha* is understood to be. Is he ego or the Self?”

D.: “*Purusha* is *svarupa*.”

M.: “But he cannot make any *prayatna* (effort).”

D.: “*Jiva* is the one who makes the effort.”

M.: “So long as egoity lasts *prayatna* is necessary. When egoity ceases to be, actions become spontaneous. The ego acts in the presence of the Self. He cannot exist without the Self.

The Self makes the universe what it is by His *Sakti*, and yet He does not Himself act. Sri *Krishna* says in the Bhagavad Gita, ‘I am not the doer and yet actions go on.’ It is clear from the *Mahabharata* that very wonderful actions were effected by Him. Yet He says that He is not the doer. It is like the sun and the world actions.”

D.: “He is without *abhimana* (attachment) whereas the *jiva* is with *abhimana*.”

M.: “Yes. Being attached, he acts and also reaps the fruits. If the fruits are according to his desire he is happy; otherwise he is miserable. Happiness and misery are due to his attachment. If the actions were to take place without attachment there would be no expectation of fruit.”

D.: “Can actions take place spontaneously without individual effort? Should we not cook our food in order to eat it later?”

M.: “*Atman* acts through the ego. All actions are due to efforts only. A sleeping child is fed by its mother. The child eats food without being wide awake and then denies having taken food in sleep. However the mother knows what happened. Similarly the *jnani* acts unawares. Others see him act, but he does not know it himself. Owing to fear of Him wind blows, etc. That is the order of things. He ordains everything and the universe acts accordingly, yet He does not know. Therefore He is called the great Doer. Every embodied being (*ahamkari*) is bound by *niyama*. Even *Brahma* cannot transgress it.” (Talk 467)

phalamata upapatteh

From Him (the Lord) are the fruits of actions,
for that (alone) is possible.
(Brahma Sutras 3.2.37)

2.

krtimahodadhau patanakAraNam /
phalamaSASvatam gatinirodhakam //

That transient fruit, which obstructs the way, is the cause of (further) descent into the great ocean of action.

Notes

That activity which is made in order to satisfy a 'want' is based on two things, the desire to possess that which is not possessed, and the fear of non-attainment of that which is desired. Both the attainment of the desire and the non-attainment of the desire are equally bitter fruits. From this, linear progression is assured. Whether there is attainment or non-attainment, the descent, into the great ocean of action, is continued. Desire for pleasure and fear of pain come hand in hand and always result in bondage. If you hold on to pleasure, you will always fear pain. True happiness involves neither of these, … and That (*Ananda* – true happiness) is your essence, … simply dropping one of them releases the bonds of both. This happens as soon as you realise that all this is just mindstuff. The idea that this action will give that effect is mindstuff.

These 'things', that you think you do, are not done by you. Things, apparently, happen, but where are you? What is your role? Your involvement is mindstuff. Action with desire for result is mindstuff. In this verse, Sri Ramana says that this is the obstruction.

> "One should not be elated on having his desire fulfilled or disappointed on being frustrated. To be elated on the fulfilment of desire is so deceitful. A gain will certainly be lost ultimately. Therefore elation must end in pain at a future date. One should not give place to feelings of pleasure or pain, come what may. How do the events affect the person? You do not grow by acquiring something nor wither away by losing it. You remain what you always are." (Talk 614)

Remember, … you are not the mind … but even so … this mind appears to have the power to enslave or liberate.

3.

ISvaraArptiam necchayAkrtam /
cittaSodhakam muktisAdhakam //

Action without desire, dedicated to the Lord, purifies the mind and brings about Liberation.

Notes

Ahamkara (ego), acting through self- interest, enslaves. This is a poor reflection of genuine Self- interest. Genuine Self- interest leads to Peace absolute. The desire for gain, on the other hand, creates a chain of mental unrest which doesn't stop with the attainment of one object of desire, but is replaced, after fulfilment or otherwise, and subsequent pleasure or pain, by another object, then another and another. If you remain within this chain of events, there is no end to desire. If you continue to look outside of yourself to gain the 'things' which are expected to bring the fruition of happiness then this search will be a never-ending labour.

Instead, Sri Ramana advises the sure course of "action without desire, dedicated to the Lord". This is the way to eliminate mental unrest and purify the mind. Identify with the underlying current. Abandon the false notion that 'I' am acting. Dedicate your life to Arunachala-Ramana. The Self acts through 'I'. Let this action go on. It only happens according to *prarabdha*. There is a store of action which will exhaust itself (even when the electricity is switched off, the fan continues to revolve for a while). Leave it to His devices. The Lord governs all fruits of *karma*. Dedicate all actions to Him, whatever you call Him. Keep Him in the background at all times. Then the sense of 'I am the doer' falls away in favour of 'I am the Instrument of the Lord'.

> "Actions form no bondage. Bondage is only the false notion, 'I am the doer'. Leave off such thoughts and let the body and senses play their role, unimpeded by your interference." (Talk 46)

When forgetfulness of the Self brings a feeling of great anguish, then *Atma vicAra* cuts in. When *Atma vicAra* cuts into meandering thoughts at the earliest opportunity then true dedication begins.

With the elimination of desire, identification with the body/mind complex is brought to an end, and the limited individual consciousness naturally returns to the eternal ocean of universal consciousness. The ego might be seen to continue to act, but thought and action no longer pander after the 'wants' of the individual but merely attend to the 'needs'. As the cooling wind blows for the benefit of all in the vicinity so the real man of action adds to the prosperity of the world.

In Bhagavad Gita there is the following description of one who has given up all notion of the false 'I' yet still acts (i.e. the *karma yogi*):

yadRcchAlAbhasamtushTo dvanvdvAtIto
vimatsarah /
samah siddhAvasiddhau ca krtvApi na
nibadhyate //

"Content with whatever comes, without effort, free from the pairs of opposites, free from envy and even minded in success or failure, although he acts, he is not bound." (Bhagavad Gita, 4.22)

4.

kAyavAnmanah kAryamuttamam /
pUjanaMjapaScintanaM kramAt //

In the matter of worship, *japa* and meditation, which are performed by body, speech, and mind respectively … each is better than the one before.

Notes

In this verse, three kinds of action are mentioned.

Worship is performed by the body so long as one considers oneself to be a separate entity. This attitude of 'otherness' has come about as a result of the limiting adjunct of self-consciousness and the ensuing fictional understanding of the mind/body complex. Worship of God is an appeal for return to

unity and as such has great validity. However, **without due care**, it can atrophy into mere desire for boons, whether that be wealth, possessions, fame, enlightenment, etc. This type of worship is founded in ignorance. *PUja* degraded to this level of desire is wild fantasy. If the posture of the body, the dress of the body, the paraphernalia of worship, the fruit of worship, have become all important, while the object of worship has become of secondary consideration, then worship has become a farce. On the other hand, worship with the sole purpose of pleasing the object of worship (*ishta devatA*), without any desire for reward, becomes *upAsanA* (pure worship). This worship inevitably leads to *nididhyAsana*, uninterrupted contemplation, where 'otherness' is totally absent.

Better than physical worship is *japa*. *Japa* stills the mind by focussing on a single thought. When *japa* becomes mental and steady, *dhyAna* ensues. With the necessary development of dispassion for the visible universe, even one repetition has the power to transform.

> "How can one reach liberation as a consequence of merely pronouncing the word '*Brahman'*, without having eliminated the visible universe, without having known the truth about one's own nature?" (Vivekacudamani, 63)

Better than *japa* is meditation. Meditation occupies the mind, channels the mind, and strengthens the mind in readiness for Self Enquiry. If it remains limited to the view of self and other, or subject and object, it remains useless, merely occupying the mind while still relying on the continued existence of the mind. By nature, this type of meditation is divisive, relying on set times and places for performance. However, concentrated continual meditation on the source of 'I' (*dhyAna*) is the meditation which opens the way to thought-free consciousness. This can, and should, be carried on throughout the day in all situations.

5.

jagatISadhIyuktasevanam /
ashTamUrtibhrddevapUjanaM //

Serving the world with intent on the Lord, is the worship of the divine bearing the eight forms (earth, water, fire, air, space, sun, moon, *jIva*).

"Serving the world with intent on the Lord." Here worship as *upAsanA*, as opposed to a mere outward show of worship, is described. This is worship par excellence, free from conceptual diversification, free from desire for reward.

The Lord is everything and everything is the Lord. Whereas people 'normally' view 'things' as external, and other than themselves, realise instead that this is imagination, illusion, mindstuff. This world … here and now … is that one reality, the Self. There is nothing other than this. You should see this now, in all circumstances. This worship is eternal worship. This is seeing Actuality. *Brahman* worships *Brahman* by means of *Brahman*. When, just once, things are seen as they are … no longer will the false be taken for reality. Sri Ramana teaches us to see the Self in everything, and everything in the Self.

It is not the case that you must give up your forms of worship but rather that you open to the truth as presented by great sages such as Sri Ramana. To falsely give up your *sAdhana* in the guise of a *jnani* is, in any case, useless. As long as the attitude of 'doer' remains, as long as you believe 'things' are real, so long is prayer and worship necessary. If you take on the attitude of the *jnani* without the Heart of a *jnani* your words and actions will be an anathema. Broaden your worship, keep your mind in worshipful attitude at all times. If the mind drifts pull it gently back. All things are in the Self, reliant on the Self. There is nothing without the Self. Being is, itSelf, worship. Sri Ramana says, "Keeping God in your mind as everything around you becomes *dhyAna*."

"To Love all is the true *bhakti* of God,
and to serve all is the real worship of God."

(Swami Ramdas)

6.

uttamastavAduccamandatah /
cittajaMjapadhyAnamuttamam //

Meditation on *japa* born of mind is better than the best hymns of praise whether chanted loudly or softly.

Notes

Here real *japa* is described.

Parrot-like repetition, of a few sacred words, is not very effective without due meditation (although it has limited validity). The endless repetition of the Vedic hymns (or other scriptures) without care and due meditation, irrespective of the skill in utterance, may achieve personal acclaim and boost the ego of the narrator, but can never achieve liberation. Gross speech, whether mental or vocal, is totally reliant on thought. Without attention focussed on the source of thought (*paSyantI*), of the one who thinks, where is the point? On the other hand, how could a single utterance, made with complete understanding of its unique source, even although uttered wrongly (*apabrahmSa*), not have the power to reveal the ever-present *Sabdabrahman*?

How can it be possible to attain liberation simply by pronouncing the word 'God', without also seeking to know the essence of one's Self and thereby eliminating the visualised universe? Those who believe it possible have set off on the never ending search for the horn of the hare. You cannot become King simply by declaring "I am King!" You have to go out and defeat your enemies before taking hold of the country. Your enemies are thought-demons which dissipate your strength of mind. Eliminate them and then, indeed, just one word can pull you to the Heart-centre.

By all means (and at all times) … pronounce the name of God … but with care, with full attention, with reflection, and with due meditation. Rather than absent-minded repetition develop a present-minded disposition. The very name of God should become your Being. Speech comes from the Self. Speech is the Self. Speech returns to the Self. Watch it arise. Watch it subside. There is the source. Abide there. This is the elusive practice of *SabdapUrvayoga*.

When this becomes a continuous practice then *upAsana*, or *dhyAna*, becomes fixed.

7.

AjyadhArayAsrotasAsamam /
saralacintanaM viralatah param //

As in the flow of *ghee*, as in the flow of a stream, an unbroken, true meditation is superior to one with intervals.

Notes

Here true meditation is described.

As *ghee* runs in a steady, deliberate, continuous stream when poured, so meditation should be steady, deliberate and continuous. As pure water always finds its way back to its source, irrespective of terrain, so the act of meditation should continue in an unbroken stream, with the sole aim of returning to the Source, overcoming all obstacles in its way.

Sri Ramana has stated that … "Meditation is, truly speaking, *Atmanishtha* (to be fixed as the Self). But when thoughts cross the mind and an effort is made to eliminate them the effort is usually termed meditation. *Atmanishtha* is your true nature. Remain as you are. That is the true aim." (Talk 294)

When one becomes established in such deliberate meditation (*dhyAna*), it becomes the mind's natural predilection. Then like water the mind always eagerly flows to its source. The mind is then likened to a pure mountain spring ever rushing towards its source (goal).

Note: See also Sri Bhagavan's explanation under verse 13 below.

8.

bhedabhAvanAt so'hamityasau /
bhAvanA'bhidA pAvanImatA //

Rather than promoting difference, the meditation, '*soham'* ('I am He'), effects non-difference. This is considered purifying.

Notes

The mind becomes bound to the visualised universe and perpetuates its independent existence, in effect, by thinking 'I am not *Brahman'*: The outward

going mind, even in meditation, worships God as different from itself and continues to cling to its separate identity, content to give way during meditation only because it retains the sure knowledge that it will resume its independence on completion of meditation as a task (part of ego's 'doing' arsenal). Therefore one must eliminate this shortcoming and arrive at that understanding, which is neither theory, nor speculation, without resorting to conceptual thinking. In this way there comes about the realisation that we are the world and the world is us. In a previous verse Sri Ramana has stated that "serving the world with intent on the Lord is worship of the Divine", here another clue is given as to how this is effected. Meditation on '*soham'* ('I am He') effects the realisation that the Self is each one of us and each one of us is the Self.

Note: The revealed *Mahavakyas* '*prajnanam Brahma'* ('Consciousness is *Brahman'*), from Aitareya Upanishad, reveals the nature of the Self; '*aham brahmasmi*' ('I am *Brahman'*), which is found in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad reveals the source of the enquiry; '*tat tvam asi*' ('That Thou Art') is found in the Chandogya Upanishad; this is the statement Guru Ramana reiterates again and again. '*Ayam Atma brahma*' ('This *Atman* is *Brahman'*), this is found in the Mandukya Upanishad; this identifies our very Being with *Brahman*.

9.

bhAvaSUnyasad bhAvasusthitih /
bhavanAbalAd bhaktiruttamA //

A supreme devotion arises because of strength of meditation, an excellent state of Being which is devoid of appearances.

Notes

That single reality (the Self) is devoid of all appearances and without differences; Existence … without beginning or end; everywhere, endless, infinite; underlying all forms, all changes, all forces, all matter, all spirit. This is the state of Being.

Supreme *bhakti* is invigorated by the strength of meditation which is facilitated when the meditator and the object of meditation are not differentiated

(as in the meditation *so'ham*). This *bhakti* is not different from *Atma vicAra* (Self Enquiry). Undoubtedly '…the Self of the *Advaitins* is the God of the *bhaktas*.' (Ramana Maharshi)

In *NAradabhaktisUtrANi* [Narada Bhakti Sutra], *NArada* concurs when he proclaims, "now that (Supreme Devotion) comes about when one rejects the visible universe (the separation which validates seeing 'things' as objects of the ego) and completely renounces objective attachment." (*sUtra* 35) This *bhakti* is synonymous with Self-Realisation; it is devotion without desire; it is its own fruit, i.e. path and goal are one and the same.

10.

hrtsthalemanah svasthatAkriyA /
bhaktiyogabodhAScaniScitam //

The act (*kriyA*) of abiding in one's natural state, the mind set in the Heart, is without doubt, Devotion, Yoga and Knowledge.

Notes

Here, *kriyA* (action) refers to the one truly continuous, uncaused, meritorious 'act' (*kriyAyoga*). This is eternal Being, the Self. Where the mind finds this place (*dhyAna*), i.e. its place of birth, there is the culmination of *karma*, *bhakti*, *yoga*, and *jnana*. For the purified mind, this takes the form of constant remembrance, also called *nididhyAsana*. This is realisation of one's natural state. Referring to this verse Sri Bhagavan proclaims, **"That is the whole truth in a nut-shell."** (Talk 222)

In practice this may take the form of, daily attention to the silent murmur of the Self, pulling the mind back through Self Enquiry (the vibration … **'I', 'I', 'I'** …, at times even becoming physically manifest on the right side of the chest), the abolition of *viyoga* through work/actions attended to selflessly, without desire for the fruits, or, the setting up of and perpetual remembrance of Sri Bhagavan in the temple of the Heart. The devotee, by Sri Bhagavan's Grace, often finds all of these in his/her life.

"*Swa swarupanusandhanam bhaktirityabhidhee-yate* (Reflection on one's own Self is called *bhakti*). *Bhakti* and Self Enquiry are one and the same. The Self of the *Advaitins* is the God of the *bhaktas*." (Talk 274)

D.: What is *Jana Marga*?

M.: Concentration of the mind is in a way common to both Knowledge and *Yoga*. *Yoga* aims at union of the individual with the universal, the Reality. This Reality cannot be new. It must exist even now, and it does exist. Therefore the Path of Knowledge tries to find out how *viyoga* (separation) came about. The separation is from the Reality only. (Talk 17)

11.

vAyurodhanAllIyatemanah /
jAlapakshivadrodhasAdhanam //

Through checking the breath, the mind cowers, like a bird caught in a net. This is a means of control.

Notes

Controlling the mind automatically controls the breath. However, for one who is unable to control the mind directly, Sri Ramana recommends breath control. Checking the breath causes the mind to falter.

Breath control is normally spoken of as having three stages: *rechaka* – exhalation; *pUraka* – inhalation; *kumbhaka* – retention.

In Talk 448, Sri Bhagavan has given the following instruction in *Jnana prAnAyama* (This is different from Hatha Yoga descriptions):

"Naham – I am not this – corresponds to *rechaka*
Koham – Who am I? (search for the I) – corresponds to *pUraka*
Soham – He am I (The Self alone) – corresponds to *kumbhaka*.
So these are the funktions of *prAnAyama*.

Again the three formulae are:
Na – *Aham* (Not – I).
Ka – *Aham* (Who – I).
Sa – *Aham* (He – I).

Delete the prefixes and hold on to the common factor in all of them. That is *Aham* – 'I', that is the gist of the whole matter."

This is a form of *Atma vicAra*.

PrAnAyama is also discussed in Yoga texts such as Siva Samhita, Gheranda Samhita, Hatha Yoga Pradipika and Yoga Sutras, among others. For those pursuing the path laid down by Sri Ramana, breath control is said to be of two kinds, *kevala kumbhaka* (absolute retention) and *prAnAyama* (regulation). The source of the breath is the same as the source of the mind therefore when the breath subsides, so does the mind and, vice versa, when the mind subsides, so does the breath. *Kevala kumbhaka* overcomes all tendencies (*vAsanas*), mind becomes purified, and the flow of breath (life force: *prAna*) is established, spontaneously, in the *brahma nAdi*, which is, in essence, the Self. This is achieved by the method described previously by Sri Ramana and by His Grace.

PrAnAyama is an auxiliary practice which, like *japa*, meditation, etc., can prepare one for the direct path of Self Enquiry. If an aspirant cannot immediately take to Self Enquiry, then the mind should be directed to watch the flow of breath. This will bring about *kumbhaka* and control of mind.

For those who are unable to bring about *kumbhaka* by simply observing the outgoing and incoming breaths, Sri Ramana mentions *prAnAyama*, as propounded by the Hatha Yogis. The following ratio has been suggested: *rechaka*; *pUraka*; *kumbhaka* – 1; 1; 4 (cf. Ramana Gita, Chapter 6). Then, gradually, on purification of the channels (*nadis*), *Suddha kumbhaka* ensues (complete control of breath) and with such control one becomes established in the Source of thought.

However, the easiest and safest method is to simply persevere with the observance of the breath. This is very effective and can be done without the need of any supervision.

Note: It must be remembered that control of breath is a temporary/preparatory measure only. *Atma vicAra* is the final solution for eradication of the human condition. For those who cannot take to this Supreme Path straight away, control of breath brings one 'closer'.

12.

cittavAyavaScitkriyAyutAh /
SAkhayordvayI SaktimUlakA //

Minds and breaths along with (their respective) thoughts and actions are two branching paths which spring from one inherent (potential) power.

Notes

Any number of branching paths, when traced back, always lead to a single source. That single innate source is the Self of all. All the senses lead back to that one source. Thoughts start from and end in that one source. Words arise from and return to that one source. The inherent power is that one source. The goal is ever the same, irrespective of the supposed starting point. The starting point is in reality also the goal.

Although *Sakti's* movement appears to bring words and worlds into being, the reality is that there is never any movement.

Whether thoughts float aimlessly or aimfully, that one source remains unaffected. Whether good actions or bad actions are performed, that one source remains unaffected. The potential can only be perceived, retrospectively, by the one who creates division. It is this dualistic vision which stimulates movement in the ground of Being. By understanding the source of thoughts and actions, one becomes firmly established in their source (*AtmanishTha*).

13.

layavinASane ubhayarodhane /
layagatampunarbhavatinomrtam //

Abeyance and destruction are the two types of control. That which is in abeyance comes back again, not that which is destroyed.

Notes

Here, the term '*laya'* indicates that kind of mental inactivity that might be attained through hypnotism, faint or trance. It should also be noted that '**mature'** v*icAra* can, and will, cut to the source even in faint. This is the expe-

rience of some. However, as long as it cherishes its perceived (objective) independence, the mind retains that independence, even if the mental inactivity was to last for one hundred years. 'Happiness', thus achieved, lasts only so long as the inactivity lasts, then the old *vAsanas* (habits of the mind), which were merely dormant, return as before. Although this may be helpful, this is not the final solution.

The attempt to merely hold back these habitual, outgoing tendencies can never give anything other than temporary relief, followed by a resurgence of thought. Consider the inactivity experienced every day in deep sleep or even that experienced under anaesthetic. Instead, destruction (*vinASana*) is advocated. Only a **conscious quest** for the I-thought, the first (and last) of all thoughts, will resolve the human condition and result in *sahaja samAdhi*. *VicAra* must become the default state of mind throughout daily activity.

By '*vinASana'* (destruction or disappearance), permanent removal of the *vAsanas* is meant. This is achieved by rooting out the 'I'-thought once and for all. This is the real solution for the human condition.

> "There are two kinds of *vasanas*: (1) *bandha hetuh*, causing bondage for the ignorant, and (2) *bhoga hetuh*, giving enjoyment for the wise. The latter do not obstruct realisation. (Talk 317)

Sri Bhagavan explained:

> "Meditation should remain unbroken as a current. If unbroken it is called *samadhi* or *Kundalini sakti*.
>
> The mind may be latent and merge in the Self; it must necessarily rise up again; after it rises up one finds oneself only as ever before. For in this state the mental predispositions are present there in latent form to remanifest under favourable conditions.
>
> Again the mind activities can be totally destroyed. This differs from the former mind, for here the attachment is lost, never to reappear. Even though the man sees the world after he has been in the *samadhi* state, the world will be taken only as its worth, that is to say it is the phenomenon of the One Reality. The True Being can be realised only in *samadhi*; what was then is also now. Otherwise it cannot be Reality or Ever-present Being. What was in *samadhi* is here and now too. Hold it and it is your nat-

ural condition of Being. *Samadhi* practice must lead to it. Otherwise how can *nirvikalpa samadhi* be of any use in which a man remains as a log of wood? He must necessarily rise up from it sometime or other and face the world. But in *sahaja samadhi* he remains unaffected by the world." (Talk 465)

14.

prANabandhanAllInamAnasam /
ekacintanAnnASametyadah //

Through control of breath, mind cowers. Through contemplation of one thought, it (mind) is destroyed.

Notes

"*Prana* and mind arise from the same source." (Talk 328)

As discussed at verse 11 above, control of breath automatically causes the mind to fall into inactivity. To destroy (or purify/purge) the mind, one-pointed contemplation, with the focus towards the root of the mind, is all that is required. This is *Atma jnana* (Knowledge of the Self).

"Bhagavan: *Eka chintana* involves continuous thought. If no other thought is to come, the one thought has to be continuous. What is meant by the verse is as follows. The previous verses have said that for controlling the mind breath-control or *pranayama* may be helpful. This verse says that the mind so brought under control or to the state of *laya* should not be allowed to be in mere *laya* or a state like sleep, but that it should be directed towards *eka chintana* or one thought, whether that one thought is of the Self, the *Ishta Devata* or a *mantram*. What the one thought may be, will depend on each man's *pakva* or fitness. The verse leaves it as one thought." (Day by Day with Bhagavan; 21-1-46)

15.

nashTamAnasotkrshTayoginah /
krtyamastikim svasthitimyatah //

For the Great Yogi whose mind is destroyed, who abides in His own Self, is there anything to be done?

Notes

You have to brush all mental concepts aside to find out. The problem is identification with the wrong 'I' – the 'I'-thought – the source of the mind – the source of mentalese (the incessant chattering of the mind – 'mindstuff'). This 'I' rises and sets each day, even re-creates itself to suit the occasion. The Great Yogi on the other hand has no need to ask "Is there anything to be done?" He just gets on with it. With mind purged (purified), he is ready for anything. Here is a mind which begins, when necessary, fresh at all times, which is ever Self-sufficient (*purNa*) within itself. Here is a mind which is truly open. Free-flowing. Thriving in Self-dependence. Without achievement. Without thought of attainment. Without desire to do. Without projection. Without illusions of *dvaita* or *advaita* or any concoction in between. Here, then, is the mind without the binding thought of enlightenment. Here is your mind, purged, purified, Self-sufficient, spontaneous. This … available in your practice … right now; at this very moment. Reflecting change, remaining unchanged. Being as it is.

mana eva manushyANAm kAraNam bandhamokshayoh /
bandhAya vishayAsaktam muktam nirvishayam smrtam //2//

"It is the mind, alone, that is the cause of people's bondage and liberation. One whose mind is devoted to the world (of objects) is bound. One whose mind is not devoted to the world (of objects) is liberated. So it is declared by the wipse)!" (Amrtabindupanishad)

16.

drSyavAritamcittamAtmanah /
cittvadarSanam tattva darSanam //

The mind, withheld from seeing the multiple universe, becomes the consciousness of the Self … that is the vision of true wisdom.

True wisdom is not dependent on that which is seen, nor on that which is heard, nor on that which is tasted, nor on that which is touched. The consciousness of the Self is not dependent on any sense, yet all of the senses are dependent on the consciousness of the Self. This, withholding from seeing the multiple universe, is called *brahmacharya*. *Brahmacharya* is living with one's being entirely surrendered to *Brahman* or Self (*Brahma* – truth, *Brahman* – the absolute; *carya* – conduct, practice of, occupation with). Earlier we spoke of "entirely giving up the notion of false 'I'." This is *brahmacharya*. By giving up *ahamkara*, the Truth is revealed. When you pander to the sense of sight … you deny the Self. When you pander to the sense of hearing …you deny the Self. When you pander to the sense of taste … you deny the Self. When you pander to the sense of touch …you deny the Self. As soon as you make an object of 'things' … you deny the Self. This is the problem of the human condition. *Brahmacharya* is the effective antidote. If *brahmacharya* is adopted, the senses become conduits of the Self rather than slaves of the objective environment. The attitude, 'I am doing this', vanishes. This negation of the Self is counteracted by the truism of *brahmacharya*. The most effective means of achieving *brahmacharya* is by adopting the path of *Atma vicAra* (Self Enquiry). Then you can conduct yourself in a manner which is conducive to a life filled with True Wisdom. This is your innate being (*svabhAva*). This is true independence. Uniqueness. Now your life becomes spontaneous. The universe is seen for what it is.

yato nirvishayasyAsya manaso muktirishyate /
ato nirvishayam nityam manah kAryam mumukshuNa //3//

"Because liberation is assured for a mind which is not devoted to objects … for that very reason, the mind should constantly be made free of attachment to objects, by one who aspires for liberation." (Amrtabindupanishad)

17.

mAnasamtukim mArgaNekrte /
naivamAnasam mArga ArjAvAt //

However when the investigation is made into the mind, there is no such mind. This is the expedient path, because it is straight.

Notes

How is this achieved?

> "When an enquiry is made to find out what is the mind, that is, of what form it is, nothing like mind remains at the end. The enquirer himself is the true form of the mind. It is only his special ray, emanation. At the time of enquiry, the emanating ray converges in the Self. Then there is no mind at all. Thus teaches Bhagavan. This is the path as it is straight." (from the Muni's Bhashya. In: Bhagavan and Nayana, p. 51)

We are not advised to analyse the nature of the mind but rather look directly. … In seeing directly all is answered.

Mind is to the snake what the Self is to the rope.[1] The mind (as object) arises because there is identification of the Self with the body. There is mediation, where no mediation is required. We are not encouraged to analyse the mind but go straight to the root instead. Mind is simply the restlessness of the human condition. When it wanders, the world is created. In reality the mind is not an independent entity. Yet independence is assumed of it. "The mind is the outcome of the ego and the ego is from the Self." (Ramana Maharshi) No boundary separates the subjective from the objective yet it appears that mind attempts to fulfil such a role. In reality though, 'mind' (*manas*) simply provides fodder for philosophers' who dream of mind.

The expedient path is, by nature (*svabhAva*), devoid of diversification. A bird flies like a bird. A fish swims like a fish. Neither one tries to be the other nor for that matter does it even try to be itself. There is nothing more natural than abidance in the Self. Bhagavan delights in giving us the shortest route.

> "The mind is only a bundle of thoughts. The thoughts have their roots in the 'I'-thought. He quoted: 'Whoever investigates the origin of the 'I'-

[1] This refers to a well-known analogy: in the dark, a rope is mistaken for a snake. Similarly, the mind is as unreal as the apparent snake, which is in fact a rope.

thought for him the ego perishes. This is true investigation.' The true 'I' is then found shining by itself." (Talk 222)

18.

vrttayastvaham vrttimASritAh /
vrttayo mano viddhyahammanah //

All states of mind are dependent on the activity of the 'I'. The activities are the mind. Know that the 'I' is the mind.

Notes

Activities of mind are dependent on the pseudo-independent action and reaction of the ego applied to, produced by, and constantly creating situations. This inevitably leads to extreme viewpoints (opposites). On the one hand, the Self, eternally flowing from the Heart through everything, form and event, spontaneously expressing itself through itself; on the other hand the ego-self, blind with the illusion of separate existence and deaf to the voice from within, ever-striving for self, to the detriment of other, with 'freewill' battling against the universe, in a vain attempt to fulfil its purely personal desires. The 'I' models a narrow universe which suits its whims and desires. The subject 'I' predicates its 'happiness', 'sadness', 'cleverness', 'stupidity', 'love for this', 'hate for that'. This bundle of thoughts, for that is all mind is, this mindstuff, superimposes itself on *arUpa* (the formless). Then boxed within this self-created linear model based on 'relative knowledge' it lives happily, sadly, etc., etc., modifying constantly its 'known' universe. *NAma* (the naming game) is its occupation.

19.

ahamayamkuto bhavaticinvatah /
ayipatatyaham nijavicAraNam //

"Where does this 'I' come from?" For one who enquires …Aha! ... the 'I' falls away. This is Self Enquiry.

When, at last, one pursues Self Enquiry with single-minded devotion, the inevitable result is for the ego-'I' simply to fall away, defeated, destroyed, leaving a spontaneous iteration of one's true identity. All the 'stuff' that this 'I' had given substance to, vanishes in an instant. The subject/object relationship has shifted.

Atma vidya, the supreme science of self-knowledge, is the key. Simply by focussing intently on the root of this 'I', which inevitably appears in every situation, such as 'I think', 'I like', 'I hate', 'I am tall', 'I am small', 'I am important', 'I have a family', etc., the 'I' sense (ego) falls away and **I** … remains. **I** remain complete, as always. The mind requires **I** …, but **I** … do not require the mind. **I** … is the permanent substrate upon which all the states appear. Waking, dream, and deep sleep all share this common ground, this ground of Being.

In Self Enquiry all is resolved in one singe question, "Who am I?"

> D.: "What is the practice?"
>
> M.: "Constant search for 'I', the source of the ego. Find out 'Who am I?' The pure 'I' is the reality, the Absolute Existence-Conscousness-Bliss. When That is forgotten, all miseries crop up; when that is held fast, the miseries do not affect the person." (Talk 17)

Whenever one is distracted by thought ask "To whom does this thought appear?" The answer "To me" is then resolved with the question "Who am I?" This is not a question for the intellect. There is no answer. Any answer the intellect might give returns one to the question "To whom does this thought appear?" The questioner himself is the answer.

eka evAtmA mantavyo jAgratsvapnasushuptishu /
sthAnatrayavyatItasya punarjanma na vidyate //11//

> "The *Atman* must be regarded as One and the same in waking, dream and dreamless sleep. For that One who has transcended the three states, rebirth does not exist." (Amratindupanishad)

20.

ahaminASabhAjyahamahamtayA /
sphuratihRtsvayam paramapUrNasat //

When the 'I' sense (ego) is destroyed, the Heart, as the supreme complete being (totality), spontaneously bursts forth (appears clearly), by itself as 'I'-'I'.

Notes

That supreme and complete Being is, because of its completeness (*purNa*), neither solely within nor solely without, but rather within and without (i.e. all there is), the true 'Centre without circumference'. The ego-'I' merely 'appears' as the limiting adjuncts. This 'I' acts like a sheath which purports to contain that within which it, itself, is contained. Its source is, and has always been, That, which in one respect might be described as 'bursting forth' when it, the 'I' sense, perishes, or, in another respect, as 'throbbing' (beating), as Itself and by Itself, eternally, continuously, the Heart of all. This does not negate the empirical world but rather returns it to its rightful place as an uncaused appearance in *Brahman*.

That this, **'I'-'I'**, can be felt within the body, as the very vibration of being, should not be a surprise, nor should it appear incongruous, after all the body/mind's existence is entirely reliant on the Self. As an imaginary pot lying at the bottom of the ocean, must contain water and be immersed in water, so it is with the body. Should it therefore be impossible for the Self to express itself through this body? Now that would be incongruous. This idea, that the twin concepts 'spiritual' and 'material' are discrete units (i.e. that there are two 'I's, one spiritual and one material), is the sole illusion.

"The whole universe is in the body, the whole body is in the Heart; therefore the entire manifestation of the universe is contained in the Heart." (Ramana Gita)

21.

idamahampadAbhikhyamanvaham /
ahamilInake 'pyalayasattayA //

This (i.e. the Heart) has the name 'I';
even if the 'I' (ego-sense) is completely absorbed, daily (i.e. in deep sleep), still its real existence ('I'-'I') is never destroyed.

Notes

D.: "*Aham* 'I' applies to the individual and also to *Brahman*. It is rather unfortunate."

M.: "It is *upadhi bheda* (owing to different limiting adjuncts). The bodily limitations pertain to the *aham* ('I') of the *jiva*, whereas the universal limitations pertain to the *aham* ('I') of *Brahman*. Take off the *upadhi* (limiting adjunct); the 'I' (*aham*) is pure and single." (Talk 433, see also Talk 314)

The Heart is calling **'I'-'I'**. However, as long as the cloud-like mind asserts its identity as 'I', the Self, as **'I'-'I'**, although ever resounding, and most intimate, goes unnoticed, unfelt. The *upAdhis* are limiting factors which bring about the appearance of sequence and differentiation, starting with wrong association of 'I' with the inert mind/body complex. While the declaration 'I', by the ego, immediately brings 'my' and 'mine' in its wake, and then, in turn, 'you' and 'yours' etc. etc., this is solely because of the auspices of the primary, undifferentiated sole identity which throbs unceasingly, as the real 'I'-'I'. As soon as the ego gives up its habit of Self-limitation, (through Self Enquiry), Heart to Heart speech, although deafeningly silent, is felt, vibrantly, as ever.

Sri Ramana's Teaching comes directly from the Heart … and as such … His words are an eternally vibrant and living compassion. If we open to Sri Ramana's words, Heart speaks to Heart, and the head (intellect) falls naturally in perpetual *namaskAr*.

22.

vigrahendriya prANadhItamah /
nAhamekasattajjaDamhyasat //

This sole existent 'I' is not the delusion of (separation into) body, senses, breath, and mind. That (delusion) is insentient, non-existent (untrue).

Notes

D.: "Why does Upadesa Sara speak of the body, etc., as *jaDa* i.e. insentient?"

M.: "Inasmuch as you say that they are the body, etc., apart from the Self. But when the Self is found this body, etc., are also found to be in it. Afterwards no one will ask the question and no one will say that they are insentient." (Talk 310)

Self-limitation is epitomised in the delusion which creates the division of ego-self and 'all' others and continues with further divisions such as body, senses, breath and mind etc. The mind-made delusion is unreal, insentient, mindstuff. While both the Sage and the ignorant man might declare, 'I am the body', the ignorant man, in separation, limits his 'concrete idea' of self to the mind and body alone whereas the Sage understands that 'all', including mind and body, is entirely dependent on the Self alone. For the Sage the world is real because he sees that it partakes of, and is reliant on, the Beingness of the One existent Self alone, unconditioned, unborn and non-dual. In this way the Sage affirms, rather than denies, Reality. However the ignorant man sees the world as a separate reality, as something other than the Self (e.g. as if he swears that the silver in the mother of pearl has a real and separate, independent existence), and sets up divisions within himself and also within the world he 'observes'. His divisions are not limited by self and world but extend to the spiritual and material. This is *jaDa*, unintelligent. The falsehood of separation results in the human condition. Mind then moulds his creation. Separation is the attitude of ignorance. If you see yourself as separate from others and others as separate from you then you sustain the multiple fields of selfish action and the resultant 'fruits' which appear to arise. Whereas if, like the Sage, one considers that the creation of the world never happened and affirms that, in absolute terms, it is an uncaused appearance, action reverts to spontaneous Self-expression.

D.: "Should I not see the world at all?"

M.: "You are not instructed to shut your eyes from the world. You are only to 'see yourself first and then see the whole world as the Self'. If you consider yourself as the body the world appears to be external. If you are the Self the world appears as *Brahman*." (Talk 272)

23.

sattvabhAsikAcit kvavetarA /
sattayAhicit cittayAhyaham //

How can one say that another consciousness is illuminating Existence, when consciousness is of the nature of Existence (Self), and the 'I' is of the nature of consciousness?

Notes

Undivided, full and complete (*purNa*), Self-luminous, this Consciousness is the substratum of existence. All else is totally dependent on It.

M.: "The whole universe is full of life. You say the stone is unconscious. It is your self-consciousness which now speaks of unconsciousness. When a person wants to see if there is an article in a dark room he takes a lamp to look for it. The light is useful for detecting the presence and the absence of the thing. Consciousness is necessary for discovering if a thing is conscious or not. If a man remains in a dark room one need not take a lamp to find him. If called, he answers. He does not require a lamp to announce his presence. Consciousness is thus self-shining". (Talk 591)

The problem is the erroneous idea that the body is the 'I'. The real 'I' is always here. It neither comes nor goes. It is not reliant on the body. It pre-exists the body. It continues once the body has vanished. This is even evidenced in the daily pattern of the three states. The illusion, of multiple discrete consciousnesses, appears with the ghost of ego. This brings association with objects in its train. On the other hand, Consciousness is self-shining. It is pure Reality without need of associates. No other can recognise Consciousness save Consciousness itself. It is Oneness. Consciousness unconceived is the Absolute. Consciousness conceived is the Universe. Consciousness is one only, without a second.

Consciousness is expressed in the three states of waking, dream and deep, dreamless sleep. It is the *Atman*, Self, witness of all. Without Consciousness nothing can be conceived of.

Atma vicAra drives us home to the goal, where even witnessing is subsumed by the *Atman*, shining as It is, devoid of *upAdhis*. Self Enquiry reveals the Truth.

> D.: "But is it not funny that the 'I' should be searching for the 'I'? Does not the enquiry, 'Who am I?' turn out in the end an empty formula? Or, am I put the question to myself endlessly, repeating it like some *mantra*?"
>
> M.: "Self Enquiry is certainly not an empty formula; it is more than repetition of any *mantra*. If the enquiry, 'Who am I?' were a mere mental questioning, it would not be of much value. The very purpose of Self Enquiry is to focus the entire mind at its Source. It is not therefore a case of one 'I' searching for another 'I'.
>
> Much less is Self Enquiry an empty formula, for it involves an intense activity of the entire mind to keep it steadily poised in pure Self-awareness. Self Enquiry is the one, infallible means, the only direct one, to realize the unconditioned, absolute Being that you really are." (Maharshi's Gospel, p. 37 f.)

24.

ISajIvayorveshadhIbhidA /
satsvabhAvato vastukevalam //

Between God and *jIva* the difference is simply the thought of an assumed appearance. The real essence is one only, the state of Self-existence.

Notes

The basis of the many polemical arguments revolve around the perceived differences between God, *jIva* and the world. While these make for interesting academic debates and might spark off coffee shop philosophy they are of no use to the serious seeker. Lay all thought of difference aside (even that of *dvaita* and *advaita*). Find out about your own reality first.

The *jIva* is self-limited by his understanding of the universe. He plots this universe around his own self-centre which continually relates back to the known. Therefore his understanding must always be rooted in the past. He also posits a myriad 'other' self-centres which he clearly sees as 'not me'. As such, a universe of judgements and comparisons is created and sustained. Reality is seldom seen, except through a mist of assumptions and when at times it shines through as non-separative consciousness the immediate response is to enjoy, analyse or re-create, in effect to claim the event as 'mine', and thus relegate that which is constant, reality, to the level of relative experience. Immediately memory steals the moment and plots it for use as a basis for future judgements and comparisons.

God on the other hand is the ultimate Centre without circumference (i.e. without limitation). Unique. All-encompassing. All the dependent self-centres assume their places as sets and subsets within the Universal. God remains, as ever, immutable. This Centre is the true Centre of all. It defies definition. All points converge, here, in this Centre. And this Centre sustains all points. This should be the object of your meditation/quest.

> "The centre of the ego and its core is called the Heart, the same as the Self." (Talk 398)

25.

veshahAnatah svAtmadarSanam /
ISadarSanam svAtmarUpatah //

By the elimination of assumed appearances, there is the vision of one's Self. This is the vision of God, because He is the form of one's own Self.

Notes

As we have seen the assumption of a false sense of selfhood and the setting up of oneself as the centre of the universe results in the human condition. The snake is seen as such only until true vision is brought to bear on the situation … then the rope is revealed as the rope it always was. The appearances and their multitudinous explanations are mere polemics. Concentrate

on the task at hand. True knowledge consists in distinguishing the Self, which is real, from the not Self, which is unreal.

> "On enquiry into its seemingly reality the false world is seen to be as unreal as a snake in a mural painting. Even so, to practice penance or perform rituals (in order to force the world out of view), is like beating a drum to scare away the post mistaken for the thief. If the teaching 'All this is false' appears faultless to you and you know it to be true, why go in search of further knowledge? The dense darkness of ignorance having fled before the sun of knowledge, why do you still doubt if this is the true light?" (Ozhivil Odukkam[1])

> "It is the Self which speaks of the non-self because it has forgotten itself. Having lost hold of itself, it conceives something as non-self, which is after all nothing but itself." (Talk 310)

26.

Atmasamsthitih svAtmadarSanam /
AtmanirdvayAdAtmanishThatA //

Remaining as the Self is the vision of one's true nature. Since there are not two selves, there is only Self-abidance.

Notes

To abide as the Self is all that is required.

"All this is *Brahman*." When the appearances, which constitute the human condition and its associates, dissolve, that which remains am 'I'. When these appearances drop away, the ever-existent Self remains, as always, as 'I'. This is the simple Truth. There is nothing new to be attained, there is no far off day or place when this will be achieved. There is no achievement as such but rather a dropping of the desire to achieve.

> M.: "The 'I' which rises will also subside. That is the individual 'I' or the 'I'-concept. That which does not rise will not subside. It **is** and will be

[1] a 17th-century Tamil classic often quoted by Sri Ramana

forever. That is the universal 'I', the perfect 'I', or realisation of the Self." (Talk 311)

You are always that. No matter how far and for how long you travel you can never ever travel any further from, or any nearer to, that. This is the simple truth.

M.: "It requires no effort, no aid. One has to leave off the wrong identity and be in his eternal, natural, inherent state." (Talk 101)

All suffering is reliant on the ignorance of the one fundamental fact that "**there are not two selves, there is only Self-abidance**." Misunderstanding this, all is misunderstood. Then self and other emanate relentlessly from our own consciousness.

27.

jnAnavarjitAjnAnahInacit /
jnAnamastikim jnAtumantaram //

True knowledge is that understanding which is without (objective) knowledge or non-knowledge. What else is there to know?

Notes

The Self is sometimes said to be unknowable. By this is meant that objective knowledge is absent because other than the Self there is nothing else to be known. A pure mind has immediate access to this knowledge because it is devoid of thought. *Atma vicAra* keeps the mind free of thoughts.

"Sri Bhagavan said that it [the world] is unreal if viewed apart from the Self and real if viewed as the Self." (Talk 516)

'True knowledge' is the daily experience. When one interacts with the world the Self simply appears to take on myriad forms. Whether or not such forms are withdrawn the Self rests happily in itself. Nothing is gained, nothing is lost, whether the world is perceived, or not.

"The *ajnani* takes the world to be real; whereas the *jnani* sees it only as the manifestation of the Self. It is immaterial if the Self manifests itself or ceases to do so." (Talk 65)

28.

kim svarUpamityAtmadarSane /
avyayAbhavApUrNacitsukham //

If there is the vision of the Self, by enquiring "what is one's true form?", there is Self-fulfilled consciousness-bliss which is without beginning and end.

Notes

"Who am I? Whence am I?" This is the enquiry! It is an enquiry into the source of the 'I'-thought. There is no answer that ego can offer that would not result in a return to the self-same Quest. When the real answer arises spontaneously there is absolutely no doubt!

> "The thought 'I', 'mine' erroneously imposed on the body and senses, which are not the real self, must be removed by the wise, by abiding as the real Self." (Vivekacudamani)

The universe of experience, to which the individual awakens each day, is reliant on the mind/body complex and dies with the disappearance of the mind/body complex. It has its beginning in birth and its end in death. Once born we become the centre of a world of our own making. This daily coming and going disappears in deep sleep, yet we remain.

> M.: "We exist in *sushupti* without being associated with the body and mind. But in the other two states [waking and dream] we are associated with them. If one with the body, how can we exist without the body in *sushupti*? We can separate ourselves from that which is external to us and not from that which is one with us. Hence the ego is not one with the body. This must be realised in the waking state. *Avasthatraya* (the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep) should be studied for gaining this outlook." (Talk 286)

> "I am the Self, O *Gudakesa*, abiding in the hearts of all beings, I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings." (Bhagavad Gita, 10. 20)

Beings go through their cycles of existence, of birth and death, of beginnings and ends, with no more substance than the participants in a dream. The true

form of the Self, meanwhile, remains, as ever, as Being-Consciousness-Bliss.

29.

bandhamuktyatItamparamsukham /
vindatIhajIvastudaivikah //

Now, in this world, the divine soul attains the Supreme Bliss which transcends bondage and liberation.

Notes

Following on from the last verse, Sri Bhagavan reveals the true purport, i.e. that realisation is not to be attained at some distant appointment designated by fate but rather that it is not only available now, here, in this world (*iha*), but is, indeed, already here. In fact, to imagine a future enlightenment is a fundamental problem.

> M.: "*Muki*, i.e., liberation, is not to be gained hereafter. It is there forever, here and now. … Existence = happiness = Being. The word *mukti* (liberation) is so provoking. Why should one seek it? He believes that there is bondage and therefore seeks liberation. But the fact is that there is no bondage but only liberation. Why call it by a name and seek it? … Only remove ignorance. That is all there is to be done." (Talk 359)

The twin concepts, bondage and liberation are themselves limiting factors firmly entrenched in the world of opposites. Throughout this Upanishad [of Upadesa Saram] we have been reminded again and again by Bhagavan, that all that we must do is "first know our Self and then all other matters will be plain to us." (Talk 548) If we can but remain as our Self all is revealed, then liberation and bondage have nothing to do with our Being. First we must pay attention to the simple fact that Supreme Bliss transcends all thought of bondage and liberation. We must realise the full implication of this statement *Atma vicAra* is the appropriate and expedient (*yoga*) tool.

30.

ahamapetakamnijavibhAnakam /
mahadidam tapo ramaNavAgiyam //

The perception of one's own Self, free of 'I', is the great *tapas*. This is Sri Ramana's word.

Notes

As we have noted the Enquiry is an enquiry into the source of *ahamkAra*. The Self needs no enquiry. All that is required is an emptying of the cloud-like thought processes which begin with the 'I'-thought. The senses can only perceive by the light they receive from the Self which abides in the Heart. The great *tapas*, which might at one time be seen as a penance sustained by great effort, is in reality the effortless return to the eternal fire of the *Atman* in the Heart.

"One-pointedness is the *tapas* wanted." (Talk 401)

The *tapas* of the Sages of DArukAvana was designed to appropriate power, through ritual (*karma*). But this merely reinforces *ahamkAra* and panders to the chronic desires with result in the human condition. In **Upadesa Saram**, Sri Bhagavan reveals that true *tapas* is nothing other than the perception of one's own Self. *Tapas* is the eternal flame which burns in the heart-cave of all. If we can but quieten the ego and turn towards it in *namaskAra*, all *vAsanas* are burned, in an instant.

om namo bhagavate sri ramanaya

D.: "What is *namaskara* (prostration)?"

M.: "Prostration means 'subsidence of the ego'. What is 'subsidence'? To merge in the source of its origin. God cannot be deceived by outward genuflections, bowings and prostrations. He sees if the individuality is there or not." (Talk 363)

Arunachala Pancharatna
(Five Stanzas to Arunachala)

Pancha – five
The five faces (panchamukha) of Arunachala. There is a point on the route around Arunachala where the five faces are visible.

Atma Vichara

Vichara is often confused with meditation. Meditation however requires subject and object whereas *vichara* eliminates the obsession with object completely.

Ramana Maharshi said, "*Dhyana* (meditation) is concentration on an object. It fulfils the purpose of keeping away diverse thoughts and fixing the mind on a single thought, which must also disappear before Realisation. But Realisation is nothing new to be acquired. It is already there, but obstructed by a screen of thoughts. All our attempts are directed for lifting this screen and then Realisation is revealed. If a true seeker is advised to meditate, many may go away satisfied with the advice. But someone among them may turn

round and ask, 'Who am I to meditate on an object?' Such a one must be told to find the Self. That is the finality. That is *vichara*." (Talk 390)

"Do not spread out the mind inquiring, 'Who may you be?' and 'Who is he?' Turn it inward questing, steadily, keenly, 'Who am I?'" (from "Who am I?")

Atma vichara (Self Enquiry) should not be considered as a mere yogic exercise to be done at certain times of the day and then forgotten until the next session, although that is certainly a valid way of introducing the mind to enquiry. [But don't get lost in the introduction – how long does it take to shake hands?] Nor is *vichara* a hobby, it becomes a way of life. The *vichara* method focusses on the meditator (the thinker) from the very outset. It is radical.

When, through Self Enquiry, brought about by intense practice, thoughts subside, there stands revealed an unbroken, eternal awareness, 'I'-'I'. It is not a watched awareness. Who is the subject that can claim such dualistic nonsense! The snake in the rope will never see the rope. 'I'-'I' is both herald and death knoll.

"In the course of tracing ourselves back to our source, when all thoughts have vanished, there arises a throb from the *Hridaya* on the right, manifesting as *'Aham' 'Aham'* 'I'-'I'. This is the sign that Pure Consciousness is beginning to reveal itself. But that is not the end in itself. Watch wherefrom this *sphurana* (throbbing) arises and wait attentively and continually for the revelation of the Self. Then comes the awareness, oneness of existence." (from a reply, approved by Bhagavan, which was sent to an English devotee; recorded in 'Moments Remembered' by V. Ganesan)

"Thoughts must cease and reason disappear for 'I'-'I' to rise up and be felt. Feeling is the prime factor and not reason." (Talk 24)

"That which is does not even say 'I am'. For, does any doubt rise that 'I am not'. " (Talk 197)

Method

"When other thoughts arise, one should not pursue them, but should inquire: ‘To whom do they arise?’ It does not matter how many thoughts arise. As each thought arises, one should inquire with diligence, 'To whom has this

thought arisen?'. The answer that would emerge would be 'To me'. Thereupon if one inquires 'Who am I?', the mind will go back to its source; and the thought that arose will become quiescent. With repeated practice in this manner, the mind will develop the skill to stay in its source." (from "Who am I?")

Maharshi makes it very clear that there is no advanced method only maturation of the *vichara*. *Vichara* is the direct method. "There is nothing more to be known than what you find in books. No secret technique. It is all an open secret, in this system." (Day by Day, 8-10-46)

Arunachala Pancharatna

Five *bhakti* stoked stanzas richly infused with symbology about Arunachala as Guru, written, by Sri Ramana Maharshi, at the request of the devotee, Ganapati Muni. The Muni embraced qualified *advaita* philosophy.

|1| Ocean of nectar, full of grace, engulfing the manifold universe with boundless light,

O Arunachala, Self supreme, be the dawn in order that the lotus of the heart may bloom.

Arunagiri (Arunachala) is considered by many to be a physical embodiment of *Sat* – i.e. Reality. As such, it stands unmoving, radiating boundless grace. All that is needed is for the outgoing mind, bounced into action by this manifestation, to about turn.

"By seeing Chidambaram, by being born in Kasi, or merely by thinking of Arunachala, one will surely attain liberation." (Arunachala Mahatyam)

"When the mind, having pure *sattva* as its characteristic remains attending to the *aham-sphurana*, which is the sign of the forthcoming direct experience of the Self, the downward facing heart becomes upward facing, blossoms and remains in the form of that (the Self); (because of this) the aforesaid attention to the source of the *aham-spurana* alone is the path. When thus attended to, Self, the reality, alone will remain shining in the centre of the Heart as ‘I am I’." (Sri Bhagavan’s letter to Ganapati Muni)

As the sun shines at all times even when we cannot see it, so Arunachala, as Self alone, shines in the hearts of all living beings, irrespective of any limited perspective. As the life-giving sun seems to 'appear' at dawn, allowing the bud of the Lotus, at last, to burst open, the plant having matured and the murky waters having been left behind, similarly, although the grace of Arunachala is forever radiating, the knot of the heart 'appears' to remain tightly bound until the maturing effect of *atma-vichara* [i.e. Self Enquiry] purifies the mind effecting the irresistible pull towards the Heart-centre, its source. Then ... the boundless light of the Self shines, as universe complete, as always, as ever, as 'I am I'. This is the dawn longed for and requested by the devotee. Grace is never conferred. It always is. When the devotee strives hard for realisation, thereby dispersing the cloud of mindstuff, boundless grace remains.

|2| In You, O Arunachala, all this, the phenomenal picture, having been created and sustained, is absorbed.

By nature, you dance as 'I' in the Heart. O Lord, they call you by name 'Heart'.

"Like the spider spreading out its web from its own mouth and then withdrawing it into itself, the mind puts forth the blossom of the world and ingathers it again.

When the mind turns towards the brain and senses, forms and names are thrust out from within. And when it rests abiding in the Heart, they enter and lie buried there again." (Ramana Mandiram; Sri Muruganar)

"I am the Self, O *Gudakesa*, dwelling in the Heart of all beings, I am the beginning, the middle, and also the end of all beings." (Bhagavad Gita, 10.20)

For both the *ajnani* and the *jnani*, the universe exists. The *ajnani* sees the visible universe alone, in separation, whereas the *jnani* understands the formless truth underlying all things, that is, the circumference-less centre, the source of 'I', the base and support of the visible universe. Understanding the source of his identity, He (the *jnani*) calls it 'Heart'. This is the final goal ... *sat-chit-ananda* (being consciousness bliss). As long as one believes in the body/mind complex, so long the myriad universe is seen in separation. Where would the picture be without the canvas on which it is painted?

|3| He, who seeks from where the 'I' arises, with pure mind, turned inwards, realising his own nature, O Arunachala, merges in you... like the river in the sea.

"Do not spread out the mind inquiring 'Who may you be?' and 'Who he?' Turn it inward questing steadily, keenly, 'Who am I?'"

"Birds in the sky and fish in water dart and leave no track behind. And none can trace the path by which the sages journeyed to the Self." (Ramana Mandiram, Sri Muruganar)

Blazing, Sri Arunachala, a seeming insentient hill, silent, seen as the very embodiment of Siva/Paramatman, the Self of all, stands revealed, in all Its glory, to the one who enters through the purifying fire of *atma-vichara* (Self Enquiry).

Atma-vichara is the means and the goal. The 'I' that rises and sets is not the real 'I'. It is nothing more than the meandering cloud, which moves, changes, and finally empties when at last it approaches the mountain. When the mind becomes pure, it, naturally, rushes to its source, like a mountain stream rushing towards the sea, effortlessly overcoming all obstacles in its path. *Atma vichara* is the purifying process which rids the mind of all impurities (mindstuff). Take up the quest 'Who am I?' Seek the impostor (ego-'I'). In the end, he is nowhere to be found!

|4| Having rejected external objects, with breath and mind controlled, meditating on you within, the yogi sees the splendour, O Arunachala, and ... in you ... enjoys bliss.

"A floating body does not readily sink unless some means are adopted for making it do so. Breath-control makes the mind quiescent. The mind must be alert and meditation pursued unremittingly even when it is at peace. Then it sinks into the heart. Or the floating body might be loaded with weights and made to sink. So also association with the wise will make the mind sink into the heart." (Talk 223)

"Arunachala! Thou dost root out the ego of those who meditate on Thee in the Heart, Oh Arunachala!" (The Marital Garland of Letters, v.1)

Seeking pleasure, the mind floats out to object after object. In this way, it believes it will attain happiness. Having gained a quickly fading, temporary

pleasure from one thing, again and again, it urgently flits to another and yet another, ever-seeking elusive happiness. Through meditation on Sri Arunachala-Ramana (*atma-vichara*), in due course, one learns to abide sufficiently quiet to hold the thinker (ego-'I') and sink, once and for all. The true nature of happiness (bliss) is Self-revealed.

"There is a space within the heart in which all space is contained within it. Fire, air, sun, moon, lightning and stars - everything exists within. When we pass beyond the mind with its measuring faculties, with its categories of time and space, we find the very ground of the universe. There all things are not dead matter as Western science has told us for so long. They are life and intelligence. Western man has been turning outwards to the world of senses for centuries and losing himself in outer space. The time has now come to turn inwards, to learn to explore the inner space within the heart, and to make that long and exciting journey to the Centre. Compared with this, the exploration of the moon and planets is the play of children." (Daily Readings with Bede Griffiths)

|5| With mind surrendered to you, forever seeing all things as your appearance, he worships you with love for no other, he is victorious, O Arunachala, in you ... immersed in bliss.

In the Narada Bhakti Sutras, "Narada concurs when he proclaims, 'now that (Supreme Devotion) comes about when one rejects the visible universe (that separation which validates seeing 'things' as objects of the ego) and completely renounces objective attachment." (sutra, 35) This *Bhakti* is synonymous with Self realisation; it is devotion without desire.

Q.: "How does one surrender completely to the Supreme (Arunachala)?"

A.: "If the thought arises, 'I do this', there is no surrender. Surrender brings an end to all effort. If you feel that you serve the Supreme, there is still no surrender. The *karma* which takes place without effort, i.e. involuntary action, is not binding. Even a *jnani* is acting as seen by his bodily movements. There can be no *karma* without effort or without intentions (*sankalpas*). Therefore there are *sankalpas* for all. They are of two kinds (1) one, binding -- *bandhu-hetu* and the other (2) *muktihetu* -- not binding. The former must be given up and the latter must be cultivated. There is no fruit without previous *karma*; no *karma* without previous *sankalpa*." (Talk 116)

As long as one hangs on to individuality, so long does the enjoyer and doer hold sway. He, who has truly surrendered, has no *sankalpas*. Give up 'I' and 'Mine'. "Supreme *Bhakti* is invigorated by the strength of meditation which is facilitated when the meditator and the object of meditation are not differentiated (as in the meditation ... *so'ham*). This *Bhakti* is not different from *atma vichara* (Self Enquiry).

"*Bhakti* and Self Enquiry are one and the same. The Self of the *Advaitins* is the God of the *Bhaktas*." (Talk 274)

*"*As in the ocean salt dissolves and disappears, so in the body lost I lay. But now I long to be absorbed in the brightness of your Grace. Eat me as food, O Lord, digest both Me and Mine. Convert my being wholly into your true body, Light." (Ramana Mandiram, Sri Muruganar)

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It's fairly straight forward. Some find it a useful way of understanding – *Advaita* without resorting to extremes. In Sanskrit grammar we have the singular, the dual, and the plural. *Advaita*, of course, means 'not two'. By removing the dual from the three numbers we leave the One and the many. Once the concept of duality is removed, there is no difference, other than expression, between the One and the many. Through *advaita* the duality of One and many is resolved. The One expresses as many… the many express the One.

> With mind surrendered to You,
> Always seeing all things as your appearance,
> he worships You with love for no other,
> He is victorious, Oh Arunachala,
> In You… immersed in bliss.
>
> (Arunachala Pancharatna)

The mind, which one must surrender, operates in the realm of duality. When negotiating daily tasks the realm of duality appears unavoidable. However the effect can be minimised by "seeing all things as your appearance", i.e. The many seen as one, discrimination … or *jnana yoga*. This is the necessary preliminary mental exercise. Not as a meditation… but as an ongoing every moment understanding.

Not two

“He worships You with love for no other”, i.e. The surrendering mind … *bhakti yoga*.

“He is victorious.” The pure, unadulterated, focussed mind. “In You… immersed in bliss” i.e. The many resolved in the One.

The many simple express the One, like the diverse leaves on a single tree. When we look at the tree we need not remove and name and count the individual leaves, standing them separately from the body of the tree… so it is with the Self.

The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita

[The backstory of the Bhagavad Gita is the Battle of Kurukshetra. *Krishna*, as a manifestation of the Divine, explains the fundamental principles of life to the young warrior and prince *Arjuna*, who was saddened by the fact that he had to fight against his own kin.

Ramana Maharshi once spoke with a scholar about the Bhagavad Gita. One of his devotees said that it was impossible to memorise all 700 verses and asked if there was a single verse that could be memorised as the essence of the Gita. Ramana pointed to Chapter X, verse 20: "I am the Self, O *Gudakesa*, dwelling in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle, and also the end of all beings." Later, he selected 42 verses from the Bhagavad Gita and rearranged them.]

Sanjaya (the Narrator) said:

Madhusudana (Sri Bhagavan, i.e. *Krishna*) spoke the following words to *Arjuna*, who, with despondent mind, eyes perplexed, and full of tears, was overcome with pity.

Sri Bhagavan said:

“This body, O Son of Kunti, is called *kshetra* ‘the field’; Sages call one who knows this *kshetrajna*, ‘the knower of the field’. Further, know ‘Me’ as the knower of the field in all the fields. This knowledge of the field and the knower of the field is considered, by Me, to be true knowledge. **I am the Self, O *Gudakesa*, who dwells in the Heart of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and, indeed, the end of all beings.** For that which is born, death is certain; for that which is dead, birth is certain. Therefore in the matter of that which is inevitable, you ought not grieve. He is neither born nor does He die. Nor having been will He cease to be again. Unborn, eternal, everlasting, the Self, the Ancient One. He is not slain when the body is slain.”

“This Self is uncuttable. This Self is unburnable. This Self is unwettable. This Self is undryable. He is eternal, omnipresent, stable, immovable and everlasting. Know that That [Self], by which all of this is pervaded, is indeed imperishable. No one is able to effect the destruction of the Immutable. The unreal is never regarded as real; the real is never regarded as unreal. The final truth about both of these has, indeed, been realised by the Seers of truth. As the omnipresent ether is not tainted because of its intangibility, so, in every case, the Self, although seated in the body, remains untainted. It is illuminated by neither sun nor moon, nor fire."

"Having gone to the Unmanifest they never return, that is My Supreme Abode. This Unmanifested [Abode] is called the Imperishable (Aum); it is said to be the Goal supreme. Having attained it they never return, that is My Supreme Abode."

"Free from pride and delusion of mind, the detrimental effects of attachment conquered, ever-abiding in the Self, desires at an end, released from the pairs of opposites called pleasure and pain, the undeluded attain this Eternal Home.”

“However, having rejected the words of the scriptures, he, who, instead follows the impulse of desire, attains neither perfection, nor happiness, nor the Supreme Path [of *vichara*]. He who sees the Supreme Lord abiding alike in all beings, the incorruptible in the corruptible, he it is who truly sees. By

devotion, alone, without sense of other, O Arjuna, can I be known and seen in such a form as I really am, and, indeed, be entered into."

"The faith of every man is in accordance with his innate disposition (whether *sattva*; *rajas*; or *tamas* etc.). Man is made of faith, as his faith is, so he is. The man of faith, occupied with That only, who has senses under control, obtains Knowledge (*jnana*). Having obtained knowledge, he very soon discovers Peace Supreme. To those, who are constantly engaged in worshipping Me with devotion, I give the Yoga of intellect (Enquiry) (cf. Talk 112), by which they come to Me. Out of compassion for them, abiding in their Self, I destroy their nescience born of ignorance, with the resplendent Lamp of Knowledge. For those whose ignorance is destroyed by Knowledge of the Self, Knowledge, like the sun, reveals the Supreme in them."

"It is said that the power of the senses is great; higher than the senses is the mind; higher than the mind is the intellect; but, even higher, than the intellect, is He, the Self of all. Thus knowing Him (the Self) to be higher than the intellect, fixing self in the Self, slay the elusive enemy (*ahamkara* – ego) so hard to find. Just as a blazing fire reduces fuel to ashes, so the Fire of Knowledge reduces all actions to ashes. He, whose undertakings are devoid of the desire for results, whose actions are completely consumed by the Fire of Knowledge, the wise call 'Sage!'"

"Little by little, one should cease from action, with intellect held resolutely and, having made the mind rest in the Self alone, one should not direct the thoughts towards anything. Whenever the restless and unsteady mind wanders out, one should withdraw it once again, subdue it, and make it rest in the Self alone. (Thus) with senses, mind and intellect controlled, the Sage, having liberation as his sole aim, free from desire, fear and anger, is indeed liberated. The Self-realised person sees the Self abiding in all beings and all beings in the Self. He looks on all things impartially (cf. Talks; 319). I provide security and maintain the welfare of those men who, ever intent, worship Me without thinking of any other."

"Of these, the wise, ever attentive and devoted to the One, excels; for I am very dear to the wise, and he is very dear to Me. At the end of many births the man of wisdom takes refuge in Me, knowing "*Vasudeva* is the indwelling Self of all." Such a great soul is indeed hard to find."

"When one gives up all of the objects of desire that continually pass through the mind (i.e. mindstuff), and remains content in the Self by the Self, alone, then is one declared to be 'established in Wisdom'. He, who abandons all objects of desire, roams free of longing, and without sense of 'I' and 'mine', he attains Peace. He, who neither upsets the world nor is upset by the world, who is freed from joy and anger, fear and anxiety, he is dear to Me. The same in honour and dishonour, the same to friend or foe, relinquishing all personal endeavours, he is said to have transcended the *gunas*."

"He who rejoices in the Self alone, is completely satisfied with the Self alone, and in the Self, alone, is content. For him there is no work to be done. For him, indeed, there is no object to acquire through action in this world, nor is there anything not to be done through action, nor has he [even] to depend on anyone for anything. Satisfied with whatever Grace may bring, free from the pairs of opposites, free from envy, steady in both success and failure, although acting, he is never bound."

"The Lord dwells in the Heart of all beings, O *Arjuna*, and by his uncanny power He moves them around as if they are mounted on a carousel-like universe. Go to Him alone for refuge with all your being. By His Grace alone shall you obtain that Peace Supreme, the Eternal Abode."

Amritabindu Upanishad

A "drop of nectar" with oceanic potential

Eka, one

[The Amritabindu Upanishad is one of the shorter *Upanishads*. Amrtabindu Upanishad literally means: a drop of nectar of immortality or a drop of water that contains the potential of the entire ocean.]

The Amrtabindu Upanishad is a succinct little text particularly pertinent to Ramana Maharshi's path of *Vichara*.

mano hi dvividham proktam Suddham cASuddhameva ca| aSuddham kA-masamkalpam Suddham kAmavivarjitam || 1 ||

The mind is spoken of as of only two kinds, pure and impure. The impure mind is solely intent on desire, the pure mind is completely free of desire.

mana eva manushyANAm kAraNam bandhamokshayoh |
bandhAya vishayAsaktam muktam nirvishayam smrtam|| 2 ||

It is the mind, alone, that is the cause of people's bondage and liberation. One whose mind is devoted to the world (of objects) is bound. One whose mind is not devoted to the world (of objects) is liberated. So it is declared (by the wise)!

yato nirvishayasyAsya manaso muktirishyate |
ato nirvishayam nityam manah kAryam mumukshuNA || 3 ||

Because liberation is assured for a mind which is not devoted to objects... for that very reason, the mind should constantly be made free of attachment to objects, by one who aspires for liberation.

nirastavishayAsangam samniruddham mano hrdi |
yadA 'yAtyAtmano bhAvam tadA tatparam padam || 4 ||

When attachment to objects is destroyed, the mind is restrained in the Heart, then it attains the true state of (its) Self. That is the Supreme Abode.

tAvadeva niroddhavyam yAvaddhrdi kshayam |
etajjnAnam ca dhyAnam Sesho nyAyaSca vistarah || 5 ||

The mind must be checked, then it becomes lost in the Heart. This is *jnAna* and this is *dhyAna*, the rest is mere argument and description.

naiva cintyam na cAcintyam na cintyam cintyameva tat |
pakshapAtavinirmuktam brahma sampadyate tadA || 6 ||

Neither is that, which is conceivable (phenomenal manifestation), to be ignored (dismissed as unreal), nor that which is unconceivable (the Self) to be imagined (as real), then, free from partiality (i.e. 'this is real', 'this is not real') *Brahman* is attained.

Note to verse 1-6

The beauty of this *Upanishad* is its directness. The first 5 verses pointed the mind (and outward-bound intellect) away from 'objects' and towards the Heart. Verse 6 serves as a reminder that one must go beyond mere intellectual discrimination. The discrimination "I am not this" or "I am this" is still firmly rooted in the mind. This is folly. It locks the mind into duality. It nurtures the seed in the mind that there is something which 'I' am not. Who is this 'I'? Trought *Atma Vichara* the natural outcome is for the *sadhaka* to go beyond this '*neti' 'neti'* approach to that Self-revealing Silence. Then any thoughts of duality or, for that matter, non-duality cannot survive.

Some recommend the *neti-neti* approach as a regular exercise (practice). This is fine for those who are attracted to it. However, here that is not the case.

svareNa samdhayedyogamasvaram bhAvayetparam |
asvareNAnubhAvena bhAvo vA'bhAva ishyate || 7 ||

As by means of sound (letters and vowels), that which is beyond sound is duly understood, so, in similar fashion, through nescience (phenomenal manifestation) Reality is considered.[1]

Note on verse 7

This verse has been interpreted in various ways. The idea is that with letters, which do not reveal the meaning of the word when analysed individually, the meaning is revealed when taken as a whole (word > sentence – the sentence giving more in the way of understanding than the individual word), so it is with the search for *Brahman*. The manifestation of the 'visible world' can be viewed as nescience or Reality dependent on perspective. If the manifestation is taken in isolation, it remains misunderstood. If seen as *Brahman* by *Brahman* …

[1] Swami Madhavananda offers an alternative translation: "One should duly practice concentration on Om (first) through the means of its letters, then meditate on Om without regard to its letters. Finally on the realization with this latter form of meditation on Om, the idea of the non-entity is attained as entity."

There are normally two methods put forward, the negative method (*neti, neti*) or the positive (*Bhakti*, surrender, serving the world as a manifestation of *Brahman*). These suit different temperaments. *Atma Vichara* encompasses both without be beholding to either.

Bhartrhari, the great Grammarian and Philosopher, points out the futility of the being versus non-being, a controversy, which, in the ultimate analysis, leaves the disputants far from the One Truth. He comments:

tasmāt sarvam abhāvo vā bhāvo vā sarvam isyate /
na tv avasthāntaram kim cid ekasmāt satyatah sthitam //

(VP, 3.3.63)

"Therefore everything is considered to be either non-existence or existence. But (in reality) no other state remains than the One Truth."

"Bhartrhari's insistence that any appearance of parts is simply a fiction, at all levels of the language system, mark him as an uncompromising non-dualist. This analysis may at times be considered by some as beyond reason and this is an important point. *Buddhi* stands at the doorway to liberation. Turning one way *buddhi, "*in the form of the enjoyer, that which is enjoyed, and the enjoyment," wanders, discriminates and rationalises a sequential description of the empirical worldview. Multiple views dependent on *ahamkara* are then observed. 'Although undifferentiated it (*Brahman*) behaves as if differentiated because of its (denotative) potentials.' Turning the other way *buddhi* stops dead in its tracks and *Brahman* shines forth in undifferentiated splendor as always." (Wright, Miles: Grammar as the Door to Liberation)

tadeva nishkalam brahma nirvikalpam niranjanam |
tadbrahmAhamiti jnAtvA brahma sampadyate dhruvam|| 8 ||

That alone is *Brahman*, unarticulated, without diversity, unembellished. Having realised 'I am that *Brahman*' one becomes the unchangeable *Brahman*.

nirvikalpamanantam ca hetudrshTAntavarjitam |
aprameyamanAdim ca yajjnAtvA mucyate budhah || 9 ||

Without diversity, endless, beyond reason and analogy, unfathomable, beginningless (i.e. causeless), having known which the Sage is set free.

na nirodho cotpattirna baddho na ca sAdhakhah |
na mumukshurna vai mukta ityeshA paramArthatA || 10 ||

The highest Truth... is realising that, "there is neither destruction, nor production; neither one who is bound by the fetters of existence, nor one who has perfected release from them; indeed, there is neither a seeker after Liberation, nor one who is liberated."

eka evAtmA mantavyo jAgratsvapnasushuptishu |
sthAnatrayavyatItasya punarjanma na vidyate || 11 ||

The *Atman* must be regarded as One and the same in waking, dream and dreamless sleep. For that One, who has transcended the three states, rebirth does not exist.

eka eva hi bhUtAtmA bhUte bhUte vyavasthitah |
ekadhA bahudhA caiva drSyate jalacandravat || 12 ||

That One alone, the Self of all Beings, abides in all created things. Although One it is seen as many, like the moon in water.

ghaTasamvrtamAkASam nIyamAne ghaTe yathA |
ghaTo nIyeta nAkASam tathA jIvo nabhopamah || 13 ||

As space enclosed in a jar takes the shape of the jar while the jar may not take the shape of space, in this way the *Jiva* resembles space.

ghaTavadvividhAkAram bhidyamAnam punah punah |
tadbhagnam na ca jAnAti sa jAnAti ca nityaSah || 14 ||

When various forms, like the jar, are destroyed again and again, He does not consider himself to be broken, he knows (himself) constantly.

SabdamAyAvrto naiva tamasA yAti pushkare |
bhinne tamasi caikatvaneka evAnupaSyati || 15 ||

While disguised in the form of words, through ignorance, one does not reach the Heart-Lotus, but...when such ignorance is rent asunder one discovers that identity alone.

SabdAksharam param brahma tasminkshINe yadaksharam |
tadvidvAnaksharam dhyAyedyadIcchAntamAtmanah || 16 ||

The sacred syllable Om (immanent aspect of *Brahman*), which is imperishable, when it has subsided, is the Supreme *Brahman*. The wise one should meditate on the imperishable if he desires the peace of the Self.

dve vidye veditavye tu Sabdabrahma param ca yat |
SabdabrahmaNi nishNAtah param brahmAdhigacchati|| 17 ||

Two kinds of knowledge must be known – *Sabdabrahman* and the Supreme *Brahman*. One immersed in *Sabdabrahman* reaches the Supreme *Brahman*.

granthamabhyasya medhAvI jnAnavijnAnatatparah |
palAlamiva dhAnyArtho tyajedgranthamaSeshatah || 18 ||

Having studied the word (*Vedas*), the learned man intent on knowledge and understanding, should abandon the word completely, like one who, in order to obtain grain, would discard the stalk.

gavAmanekavarNAnAm kSIrasyApyekavarNatA |
kSIravatpaSyate jnAnam linginastu gavAm yathA || 19 ||

From cows of various colours, the milk is of one colour. In accordance with the appearance of the essential characteristic of cows, the knowledge, full of milk, is found.

ghrtamiva payasi nigUDham bhUte bhUte vasati vijnAnam |
satatam manthayitavyam manasA manthAnabhUtena || 20 ||

Like butter hidden in milk, pure Consciousness abides in all beings. It should be churned out, continually, by the action of the churning stick of the mind.

(note: the churning stick is *vichara*, and *vichara* is the one truly continuous and meritorious act (*kriyA yoga*)

jnAnanetram samAdAya uddharedvahnivatparam |
nishkalam niScalam SAntam tadbrahmAhamiti smrtam|| 21 ||

Having taken hold of the rope of knowledge, one should bring out the Supreme Self, like fire. “Undivided, immovable, calm, I am that *Brahman*.” Thus it is remembered.

(note: Here the release of fire from wood is alluded to. *Vichara* (the string/rope), whirs the mind (the fire stick) around, and releases the Spark from within.)

sarvabhUtAdhivAsam yadbhUteshu ca vasatyapi |
sarvAnugrAhakatvena tadasmyaham
vAsudevastadasmyaham vAsudeva iti || 22 ||

He who abides in all beings and who is the abode of all beings, by dint of His universal Grace, 'I am that *Vasudeva*, I am that *Vasudeva*.'

om SAntih SAntih SAntih

What is a *sadhaka*, a note to v. 10

na nirodho cotpattirna baddho na ca sAdhakhah /
na mumukshurna vai mukta ityeshA paramArthatA // 10 //

“The highest Truth... is realising that, ‘there is neither destruction, nor production; neither one who is bound by the fetters of existence, nor one who has perfected release from them; indeed, there is neither a seeker after Liberation, nor one who is liberated.’”

The term '*sAdhaka*' is normally translated as 'spiritual aspirant' or 'seeker'. The idea 'seeker' of course carries with it the corollary concepts that there is a goal to be sought and to be achieved. So the *sAdhaka* embarks with the notion that he/she will obtain some boon such as *moksha*.

In this verse '*sAdhaka*' is paired with its opposite, '*baddha*' – bound or tied (by the fetters of existence). *SAdhaka* refers to the individual who navigates the perceived linear process (*baddha – moksha*) which traverses the fetters of bondage and culminates in perfection, the remedy to being bound. So the term *sAdhaka* comes as a bundle of related concepts. Here, one might give

apposite consideration to the often quoted “the path and goal are one and the same”.

This verse speaks from the standpoint of the 'highest Truth'... *jnana* is not twofold... it is without effect, without cause, without action, without name, without comparison, without predicate. Mind alone is the cause of bondage and liberty. Bondage is only the false notion 'I am the doer' (this includes claim to the actions of the *sAdhaka*).

“Bondage, liberation and orders of *mukti* are all said for the *ajnani* in order that ignorance might be shaken off. There is only *mukti* and nothing else.” (Talk 266)

Amrtabindupanisad reiterates that *jiva* and *Brahman* are One and any notion of a twofold reality is mere superimposition. It encourages the elimination of opposites such as bondage and liberation. From the relative (twofold) viewpoint of the *sAdhaka* the purpose of *sAdhana* is to reach that point where seeking stops. *SAdhana* ripens when the mind is sucked into the Heart (*manonasa*). At this point the highest Truth is revealed and terms such as *sAdhana*, *sAdhaka* are no longer troublesome.

Narada Bhakti Sutras

[Narada is considered the author of the *Bhakti Sutras*. He was a *rishi*, a seer, and a devotee of *Krishna* and *Vishnu*.

One day, *Vyasa* said to Narada: "Man seeks freedom. This seeking without devotion is dry. Many paths lead to freedom but they have importance only in so far as they are auxiliary to devotion. I, therefore humbly ask you to explain to me the virtue of devotion." The sage said, "I shall explain devotion to you in the form of sutra (aphorism). Saying so, the sage delivered a discourse on devotion in 84 aphorisms.

Unfortunately, Miles was unable to complete his translation of the sutras on *bhakti* by the sage Narada. It contains only 24 of 84.]

Vivekananda: "*Bhakti* has been the one constant theme of our Sages. Apart from the special writers on *Bhakti* such as Shandilya or Narada, the great commentators on the *Vyasa* Sutras, evidently advocates of knowledge

(*Jnana*), have also something very suggestive to say about love. Even when the commentator is anxious to explain many, if not all, of the texts so as to make them import a sort of dry knowledge, the Sutras, in the chapter on worship especially, do not lend themselves to be easily manipulated in that fashion." (Vivekananda: Complete Works, Vol. 3, Bhakti-Yoga)

"A sudden fear, sudden joy, or a shock makes the Heart vibrate very forcefully, so that it can be felt by anyone who pays attention to it. Otherwise it is felt only in *Samadhi*." (Ramana in: S.S. Cohen: Guru Ramana, 25. April 1937)

The Path of Bhakti - Sutra 1

prathamo 'dhyAyah -- parabhaktisvarUpam /

First Chapter -- The nature of Supreme Devotion

athAto bhaktim vyAkhyAsyAmah ||1||

Now, we shall describe in detail the path of Devotion (*Bhakti*).

atha: now
atah: then, from this point
bhaktim: Devotion (Divine Love)
vyAkhyAsyAmah: we shall describe

Sandilya[1] starts his Bhakti Sutras with a similar statement - athAto bhakti jijñAsA – Now, then, the investigation into Devotion!

Scholars have made much, of the word 'atha' - 'now'. For example, in the Brahma or *Vyasa* Sutras, and elsewhere, this simple word has sparked off great debate, by different schools of thought. Does it refer to a sequence of events? If so what are they? Is it to do with maturity or competence of the seeker? Does it refer to the prerequisite study of other scriptures? etc. - While there might be validity in such polemics for treatises which deal with philosophical speculation, this is not the case here.

[1] Sandilya also wrote a Bhakti Sutra.

The Bhakti Sutras are open to anyone. *Vyasa* has asked Narada to explain the doctrine of Divine Love (*Bhakti*) and Narada, ever-eager to share his understanding, immediately says, "Ok, now that you've asked, let's do it!" The fact that *Vyasa* has already explored the doctrines of *Jnana* and *Karma* does not set a precedent. Although it is interesting that he still feels something lacking in himself. All that is required of the student of Bhakti is a genuine desire for *Bhakti*, devoid of any other motive. *Ahetuka bhakti* (Devotion without a motive) is the crux of Narada's Sutras.

Sutra 2 - The pull from within

sA tvasmin paramapremarUpA ||2||

It is, indeed, of the nature of intense love towards **Him.**

sA: It (*Bhakti*)
tu: now, indeed
asmin: to Him
parama-prema: Supreme Love, intense love
rUpA: of the nature of, in essence

In his second sutra, Sandilya makes a similar statement, "sA parAnuraktirISvare" – "It (*Bhakti*) is attachment (*anurakti*) to God."

Bhakti is the ultimate goal, but it is also the path. The initial stirrings of devotion, that mysterious *bhaktisvabhavana* (magnetic, innate tendency which seems to pull from within), even selfish devotion with desire for results, all of this is referred to as *Bhakti* and it inevitably matures into *Bhakti* proper – *paramapremabhakti* – a devotion in which the illusion of 'I' is cast off.

"O Arunachala! Thou dost root out the egoity of those who think 'I am, verily, Arunachala!" (Arunachala Aksharamanamalai, trans. Mahadevan)

"O Arunachala! as soon as Thou didst claim me, my body and soul were thine. What else can I desire? Thou art both merit and demerit, Oh my Life! I cannot think of these apart from Thee. Do as Thou wilt then, my Beloved, but grant me only ever increasing love for Thy Feet!" (from Bhagavan's 'Necklet of Nine Gems', Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi; Rider; 1975)

Sutra 3 - The ambrosial nectar

amRtasvarUpA ca ||3||

And it is of the nature of nectar.

amRta: immortality, nectar, bliss
svarUpA: of the nature of, own form

AmRta is the ultimate curative for this human condition, the ambrosial nectar, which bestows immortality, or rather re-instates our innate natural state, our Self-nature, which is dependent on neither birth nor death.

"O Arunachala! When Thou dost administer medicine for delusion, why should I (continue to) be deluded? Be Thou resplendent as the Gracious Hill of Medicine!" (Arunachala Aksharamanamalai 76, trans. Mahadevan)

Sutra 4, 5, 6 – *amrta*, *purna*, devoid of selfish desire

yallabdhvA pumAn siddho bhavati, amRto bhavati, tRpto bhavati. ||4||

Having gained which, a person becomes perfect, becomes immortal, becomes satisfied.

yat: which
labdhvA: having gained
pumAn: person
siddhah: perfect
bhavati: becomes
amRtah: immortal
tRptah: satisfied

yat prApya na kimcid vAnchati, na Socati, na dveshti, na ramate, notsAhI bhavati ||5||

Having attained which no -'thing' can deceive any longer, a person no longer grieves, nor hates, nor rejoices, (selfish) desire no longer arises.

yat: which
prApya: having attained

na: not
kimcid: anything
vAñchati: deceives
Socati: grieves
dveshti: hates
ramate: rejoices
na: not
utsAhI: desire, (selfish) action
bhavati: becomes

In sutra five the word 'vAñchati' has been translated as 'deceive', more often it is translated as 'desire'. The scholar would perhaps point out that there has been confusion with root 'vañc'- 'deceive'. This is fine, however it is 'vAñch' in its aspect of 'assertion' which is taken here. This apparent assertion of objects on and by the mind, as when silver is seen in mother of pearl or a snake is seen in a rope, or the assertion of light and shadow all the while neglecting the screen, is invalidated by true *Bhakti*. Mind running wild, unrestrained, accepts these things on the flimsiest of evidence, without due discrimination. Narada plays with the word 'vAñchati'. It encompasses 'vañc' and goes beyond it.

In essence, this sutra reveals the deceptive nature of desire. Desire, although appearing to be the harbinger of happiness, never quite makes the grade. Once one object of desire is satisfied the mind soon has another in its sights, ad infinitum. So, “When a person sees me, the Self of all, the knot of the Heart is broken asunder, all doubts are dispelled and *karma* is exhausted.” (Uddhava Gita)

When the things of this world are nullified by attainment of true *Bhakti*, which is non-different from mature Enquiry, the progressive nature of desire is eliminated. One no longer grieves when the object is not attained to ego's satisfaction, nor rejoices when it is attained. Selfish desire, ego, mindstuff, is eradicated, and, in its place complete satisfaction (*pUrNa*) is found, as ever.

yat jñAtvA matto bhavati, stabdho bhavati, AtmArAmo bhavati ||6||

Having known which, a person becomes intoxicated, becomes immovable, becomes fixed in the delight of the Self.

yat: which
jñAtvA: having known
mattah: intoxicated
bhavati: becomes
stabdhah: immovable
AtmarAmah: fixed in the delight of the Self

Perfect Bliss is *Brahman*. Perfect Peace is of the Self. That alone exists and is conscious. The same conclusion is arrived at: (a) judged metaphysically, and (b) inferred by *Bhakti Marga* (Path of Devotion). We pray to God for Bliss and receive it by Grace. The bestower of bliss must be Bliss itself and also Infinite. Therefore *Iswara* is the Personal God of infinite power and bliss. *Brahman* is Bliss, impersonal and absolute. The finite egos, deriving their source from *Brahman* and then *Iswara*, are in their spiritual nature bliss only. Biologically, an organism functions because such functions are attended with happiness.

"Ego's perfection is suddenly broken at a point and a want is felt giving rise to a desire to get something or do something. When that want is cured by the fulfilment of that desire, the ego is happy and the original perfection is restored. Therefore happiness may be said to be our natural condition or nature. Pleasure and pain are relative and refer to our finite state, with progress by satisfaction of want. If relative progress is stopped and the soul merges into *Brahman* – of the nature of perfect peace – that soul ceases to have relative, temporary pleasure and enjoys perfect peace - Bliss. Hence Self-Realisation is Bliss; it is realizing the Self as the limitless spiritual eye (*jnana dristi*) and not clairvoyance; it is the highest self-surrender. *Samsara* (the world-cycle) is sorrow." (Talk 28)

Sutra 7 & 8 – Surrender – Giving up the attitude of the 'doer'

sA na kAmayamAnA nirodharUpatvAt ||7||

It (i.e. *Bhakti*) does not lead to selfish desire because by its very nature it controls the wayward activities of the mind.

sA: It
na: not
kAmayamAnA: selfish desire
nirodha-rUpatvAt: because it is of the nature of; destruction (of the ego); control (of mindstuff).

nirodhastu lokavedavyApAranyAsah ||8||

Now control is the giving up of the attitude of doer with regard to ('all things') secular and sacred.

nirodhah: control
tu: now; but ('tu' draws our attention to the fact that this sutra concerns the definition of 'nirodha')
loka: secular
veda: sacred
vyApAra: operation; exertion; effort
nyAsah: laying aside

"Surrender to Him and abide by His will whether He appears or vanishes; await His pleasure. If you ask Him to do as you please that is not surrender but command to Him. You cannot have Him obey you and yet think that you have surrendered. He knows what is best and when and how to do it. Leave everything entirely to Him. His is the burden; you have no longer any cares. All your cares are His. Such is surrender. This is *Bhakti*." (Talk 450)

In this concise sutra (8), Narada is careful to define what he means by *'nirodha'*. He makes it clear that control is the complete laying aside of the attitude of doership. *Bhakti* is surrender of the attitude of doership.

"Surrender is *Bhakti yoga*. To reach the source of the 'I' - thought is the destruction of the ego, is the attainment of the goal, is *prapatti* (surrender), *jnana*, etc." (Talk129)

"Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you sacrifice, whatever you give, whatever austerity you perform, do it as an offering to Me." (Bhagavad Gita, 9.27)

“Surrender once for all and be done with the desire. So long as the sense of doership is retained there is the desire; that is also personality. If this goes the Self is found to shine forth pure. The sense of doership is the problem and not the actions themselves. Be still and know that I am God. Here stillness is total surrender without a vestige of individuality.“ (Talk 354)

Sutra 9, 10 & 11 - Renunciation and Surrender

tasminnananyatA tadvirodhishUdAsInatA ca ||9||

In respect of this (renunciation of the 'I-am-the-doer' attitude), there must be total surrender and indifference to that which opposes it.

tasmin: with regard to this, i.e. setting aside the ideas and attitudes of 'I-am-the-doer'
ananyatA: helplessness; total surrender, integrated identity, exclusive devotion.
tad-virodhishu: with regard to that which is hostile; incompatible; opposed to it
udAsInatA: indifference; not moved by self-interest

This surrender might be compared to the helpless kitten which simply calls with the absolute conviction that her mother will come and do the necessary.

anyASrayANAM tyAgo 'nanyatA ||10||

Total surrender is the forsaking of all other refuges.

anya: other
ASrayANAM: of refuges; supports; abodes
tyAgah: forsaking; rejecting
ananyatA: helplessness; total surrender, integrated identity

Rejection of all other supports and reliance on that One is total Surrender.

lokavedeshu tadanukUlAcaraNaM tadvirodhishUdAsInatA ||11||

Indifference with regard to that which is hostile to renunciation of ego, is explained as the performance of only that which is favourable when attending to all secular and sacred acts.

lokavedaeshu: with regard to secular and sacred acts
tad: that
anukUla: favourable
AcaraNam: performance
tad-virodhishu: to that which opposes; is hostile to; contradictory
udAsInatA: indifference

That which is favourable -- is any work done in an attitude of surrender. As long as you see yourself as the worker so long you must reap the fruits of your actions. If, on the other hand, the individual ego-self is understood as a tool in the hands of the Higher Power, then the fruits of any actions no longer cling.

This sutra advocates positive action in an attitude of total surrender. This might involve the individual in good/humanitarian works or then again it might not. When the devotee has surrendered, all acts are good acts. This is explained very nicely in Bhagavad Gita.

Indifference is, in essence, the positive renunciation of limited self-interest and the opening up to the Self.

Sutra 12 – Counsel of Guru

bhavatu niScayadArdh.yAdUrdhvam SAstrarakshaNam ||12||

Let there be care for the precepts (even) after the establishment of firm conviction.

bhavatu: let there be
niScayadArdh.yAt: establishment of firm conviction; fixed intention; ascertainment
Urdhvam: after; beyond; above
SAstrarakshanam: care (or protection) for the precepts or authority

The *SAstra* (precept) referred to here is the good counsel of the Guru and not merely blind adherence to scriptural authority. The scriptures of the Sages of old are 'renewed' by the Guru of today. The Guru embodies the scripture and re-enacts the Truth. Without this re-enactment, by those who have realised Truth, scripture remains open to degradation, interpolation, speculation and polemics. To abandon the authority of the Guru before one has realised the Truth of Guru is a grave mistake.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi enacted *SAstra* in his daily life. It is this confirmation which invigorates the Path. The devotee might follow his example.

Kabir warns: There is he who takes on the appearance of a ragged beggar, and who superbly mantles himself with his own liberality. There is he who passes his time getting drunk, and who grows silly on mantras and tantras. Some try to acquire *siddhis*. others observe all sacred fasts, or go on pilgrimage to sacred places, but none of these has ever thought of abandoning himself in the arms of devotion.

Sutra 13 & 14 – Needs vs. Wants

anyathA pAtityaSankayA ||13||

Otherwise there is fear of falling back.

anyathA: otherwise
pAtitya: loss of position; degradation; falling back
SankayA: because of apprehension; fear; doubt

As long as one continues to heed good counsel, there can never be any fear of falling back. One must pursue the Path in good company right to the end.

loko'pi tAvadeva bhojanAdivyApArastvASarIradhAraNAvadhi ||14||

Also everyday life must be limited to essential activities such as taking food etc. solely with a view to sustaining the body.

lokah: everyday life
api: also
tAvat: just so much

eva: only
bhojana Adi vyApArah: activities such as taking food
tu: but
ASarIra: the body
dhAraNa: maintaining; sustaining
avadhi: limited, limited to the maintenance of the body

Pandering to luxury beyond one's needs takes one into the realm of wants and is counterproductive. To take more than one needs to sustain a healthy life, even to the detriment of society as a whole, is fast becoming the perceived norm in the world. Sai Baba of Shirdi said, "He that slays, saves. He that saves, slays." (Charters and Sayings) Sai Baba refers to the saving grace of *atma vichara* (Self Enquiry) and the ego-sustaining *loka vichara* (world-fascination). The concept of reward should be abandoned and in its place the search for, and devotion to, Truth should be sought for its own sake alone.

External contacts with objects other than itself make the mind restless. Loss of interest in non-Self (*vairagya*) is the first step. Then the habits of introspection and concentration follow. They are characterised by control of external senses, internal faculties, etc. (*sama*, *dama*, etc.) ending in *samadhi* (undistracted mind).

"In the absence of enquiry and devotion, the natural sedative *pranayama* (breath regulation) may be tried. This is known as *Yoga Marga*. ...If an aspirant be unsuited temperamentally for the first two methods, and circumstantially for the third method, he must try the *Karma Marga* (doing good deeds, for example, social service). His nobler instincts become more evident and he derives impersonal pleasure. His smaller self is less assertive and has a chance of expanding its good side. The man becomes duly equipped for one of the three aforesaid paths. His intuition may also develop directly by this single method." (from Talks 26 & 27)

Flavours of *Bhakti*

tallakshaNAni vAcyante nAnAmatabhedAt ||15||

The characteristics of *Bhakti* are defined in various ways because of differences of opinion.

tat lakshaNAni: the characteristics of it (*Bhakti*)
vAcyante: are defined
nAnA: variously
mata: opinion
bhedAt: because of difference

Although Arunachala can be described from a variety of perspectives and a particular devotee may have a favourite viewpoint, Arunachala, Itself, remains unchanged and undescribed, and yet a taste has been conveyed. Similarly, the various descriptions given in the next few Sutras highlight the particular viewpoints of different commentators and give some flavours of *Bhakti*. Although limitless, *Bhakti*, which is nothing other than Grace, comes within reach of the experience of all sincere devotees, to an extent. All that is necessary is for Him to reveal this much of His Grace, and no more. This much can eradicate all the defects of the human condition. He is known according to our needs. Practice, with faith, free from bargaining, is called *Bhakti*.

Worship of the eightfold Forms

pUjAdishvanurAga iti pArASaryah ||16||

***vyAsa*, son of parASara, says "*Bhakti* is genuine affection for worship, and the rest."**

pUja-Adishu: worship; homage; honour; respect - etc.
anurAga: genuine affection or attachment; love; contentment
iti: "says" (Sanskrit quotation marks)
pArASaryah: son of parAsara – vyAsa

jagatISadhIyuktasevanam |
ashTamUrtibhrddevapUjanaM ||5||

“Serving the world with intent on the Lord, is worship of the divine bearing the eight forms (earth, water, fire, air, space, sun, moon, *jiva*).” (Ramana Maharshi: Upadesa Saram, v.5)

In *Srimad Bhagavatam* (Skanda 7), Narada describes true worship as the worship of *Achyuta*, the Imperishable, residing in all bodies as the indwell-

ing Self (*Vasudeva*). Through this worship, the devotee develops an attitude of honour and respect towards the Supreme *Brahman*, in each and every action (*kriyAdvaita*), whether of body, speech or mind, thereby banishing once and for all the dichotomy of the secular and the sacred. He further reiterates that the only recipient fit to receive worship is the Supreme *Bhagavan* of whom this whole world is a gross manifestation and that this worship results in the satisfaction of all beings (*sarvajIvAtma*) within whom He resides as their very own Self.

"To him whose eightfold form is all this moving and unmoving universe, appearing as earth, water, fire, air, ether, the sun, the moon, and soul: beyond whom, supreme and all-pervading, there exists naught else for those who enquire into him the gracious Guru *Dakshinamurti*, may this obeisance be!" (from Sri Ramana Maharshi's Tamil rendering of Shankaracharya's 'Hymn to Dakshinamurti'; Collected Works, 1975, p. 123)

"At close of many births he who is full of knowledge worships me, thinking the while *'Vasudeva* is all,' *Mahatma* he, such is indeed most difficult to find." (from Bhagavan's Bhagavad Gita, v.33 [7.19]; trans. Chadwick, edited by Bhagavan)

Sutra 17 - The Art of Conversation

kathAdishviti gargah ||17||

Gargamuni says "[*Bhakti* is] conversations etc."

kathA: 1. conversation, speech, talk; 2. how? whence? why?; particle of interrogation.
Adishu: (Adi with loc. pl. case marker) beginning with, etc., and so on.
iti: Sanskrit equivalent of inverted commas; thus
garga: Sage; son of *Brahma*

This is an interesting sutra and is open to various interpretations. Most often, it is said to refer to *harikathA*, prayers, *bhajans*, *japa* and study etc, citing Bhagavad Gita 10.9 – "Minds fixed in Me, life absorbed in Me, always discussing and enlightening each other, speaking of Me, they satisfy and delight."

The word *'kathA'* suggests a dynamic relationship between speaker and hearer. The ancient *Rshis* realised the Self, spontaneously. They, then, established the relation of teacher and pupil, for those unable to see directly themselves. The next batch of teachers were *SrutarshayaH*, or *Rshis* who had asked questions and received instruction by listening to the words of their teachers. *Bhakti* truly commences when one accepts and is accepted by the Teacher.

Sri *Sankaracharya* said that one must have faith (*Sraddha*) in the words of the Srutis (scripture) and those teachers, ever living in *Brahman*. Mundaka Upanishad confirms this by saying, "...in *order* to fully understand let him go, with firewood in his hand[1] to a Teacher, who is learned in the Veda, and ever living in *Brahman*." (1. 2. 12) This is the gist of this sutra.

Maharshi Ramana, like those *Rshis* who went before, has left a wealth of written material (*Agama* or *AmnAya* – Sacred Tradition) for his devotees and all he asks in return is the surrender of the ego.

Sutra 18 – *Bhakti* is Blissful Abidance

Atmaratyavirodheneti SANDilyah ||18||

SANdilya says "(whatever!... as long as it does not interfere) with unimpeded, blissful abidance in the Self."

Atma-rati-avirodhena: with unimpeded, blissful abidance in the Self
iti: "...", thus
SANDilya: Sage; composer of SANDilya sUtram, 100 Aphorisms

Sandilya has no argument with other definitions of *Bhakti* provided that these definitions do not interfere with natural, steady, blissful abidance in the Self, the very Heart of Being, i.e. if *bhakti* becomes a barrier and remains an unfulfilled immature ideal, he's not interested.

[1] "...with firewood in his hand" refers to the pupil's provision of fuel to be burned in the Teacher's sacrificial fire at the time of initiation. While this might be taken literally (and indeed was...cf. Chandogya Upanishad, 4.4.5), it also has great metaphoric weight.

In Sandilya Sutras he says, “sA parAnuraktirISvare – Supreme Devotion is attachment to the Lord (Self).”

(Sandilya Sutra; 2) “...and it is for want of such devotion that there is a descent into the realm of birth and rebirth.”

In Sandilya's definition, an occasional obeisance; the singing of an odd hymn; a prayer made through fear or worldly desire; an intermitent *japa*; the professional telling of spiritual tales; or even occasional meditation, etc., does not constitute *Bhakti* proper, nor does the idea that one should worship through duty or fear based on the fickleness of the intellect. Unless the fire of devotion burns up the sense of 'I', 'me' and 'mine', eliminating all *upadhis* (limitations) and leaves the ever-present Self as I, as I, it will become no more than a pretension.

“When the mind, having pure *sattva* as its characteristic remains attending to the *aham-sphurana*, which is the sign of the forthcoming direct experience of the Self, the downward facing heart becomes upward facing, blossoms and remains in the form of that (the Self); (because of this) the aforesaid attention to the source of the *aham-spurana* alone is the path. When thus attended to, Self, the reality, alone will remain shining in the centre of the Heart as 'I am I'.” (Sri Bhagavan's letter to Ganapati Muni)

This is *Bhakti*.

“May I always have unswerving attachment to You!” (Visnu Purana)

Sutra 19 & 20 - Remembrance

nAradastu tadarpitAkhilAcAratA tadvismaraNe paramavyAkulateti ||19||

However, Sage nArada says that it is defined as “dedication of all acts, without exception, to Him and extreme agitation when He is forgotten.”

nAradah: the sage Narada, composer of this text
tu: however
tad arpita akhila Acarata: the dedication of absolutely all activities to Him
tad vismaraNe: when He is forgotten

parama vyAkulata: extreme agitation
iti: says

Remember Arunachala. Remember *vichara*. Remembrance is the ego-killer.

In practice this may take the form of, daily attention to the silent murmur of the Self, pulling the mind back through Self Enquiry (the vibration 'I', 'I', at times even becoming physically manifest on the right side of the chest), the abolition of *viyoga* (separation) through work/actions attended to selflessly, without desire for the fruits, or, the setting up of and perpetual remembrance of Sri Bhagavan in the temple of the Heart. The devotee, by Sri Bhagavan's Grace, often finds all of these in his/her life.

Constant remembrance is the great aid to *vichara*. This is remembrance of 'something innate', close, not a reasoned system of analysis. Constant *Swarupa smarana* (remembrance of one's true nature), is all that is required.

astyevamevam ||20||

This is, indeed, so.

asti: this (it) is
evam evam: indeed so (such and such)

This is not an unfounded claim by Narada, there are examples, as shall be seen in the next few sutras.

D.: "Does not *bhakti* imply duality?"

M.: "Swa swarupanusandhanam bhaktiriyyabhidheeyate – Reflection on one's own Self is called *Bhakti*). *Bhakti* and Self Enquiry are one and the same. The Self of the *Advaitins* is the God of the *Bhaktas*." (Talk 274)

Sutra 21 - 24 – selfless Love vs. selfish Love

[Narada continues:]

yathA vrajagopikAnAm ||21||

For example, [the Supreme *Bhakti*] of the *Gopis* of Vraja.

yathA - for example
vraja - gopikAnAm - of the Gopis of Vraja
tatrApi na mAhAtmyajnAnavismrtyapavAdah ||22||

In fact, in their case, there was not even the possibilty of forgetfulness of the higher knowledge of His greatness.

tatra: there
api: even, also
na: not
mAhatmyA: noble-mindedness; majesty; dignity
jñAna: knowledge
vismrti: forgetfulness; lacking awareness
apavAdah: blame; refutation; assertion; accusation; a special rule which sets aside the general rule

tadvihInam jArANAmiva ||23||

Deprived of that knowledge, it would simply be like the selfish love of worldly lovers.

tat: that
vihInam: deprived of; without
jArANAm: of lovers or paramours
iva: like; as

nAstyeva tasmin tatsukhasukhitvam ||24||

Indeed, in that instance of selfish love, the ecstatic state of the devotee taking pleasure in the happiness of Him, alone, is missing.

na: not
asti: it is
eva: indeed
tasmin: in that case [i.e. illicit love]
tat: Him
sukhasukhitvam: of the nature or state of happiness in the happiness of the other

In his introduction to Arunachala Aksharamanamalai, Dr T. M. P. Mahadevan writes the following: "In bridal mysticism, the devotee considers himself to be the bride of God. He employs the intimate language of love in conversing with his Lord. All the processes connected with carnal love are observed to take place between the devotee-soul and the bridegroom, except the carnality. The devotee pines for, cringes, cajoles, chides and quarrels with the Beloved. There are courtship, union, separation, and reunion. In that phase of mysticism which is known as bridal mysticism, the mystic revels in the love-play with the Divine. The culmination of this *sadhana*, however, is the Realisation of non-duality. Love is never satisfied so long as the dualistic consciousness lasts. Where twoness is, there is no true love. Love is oneness; *ananda* is *Advaita*; the *Atman* is *rasa*. In Sri Ramana's love-litany we have this clearly taught. ...In the first verse[1] of Arunachala Aksharamanamalai he speaks of the 'I am Arunachala' experience. When love matures and realises itself, there is nothing but Arunachala. Arunachala is all; all is Arunachala. This is the plenary experience which is *advaita*."

In *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Skanda 10, Chapter 29, we find Sri *Krsna* remonstrating, in jest, with the *Gopis* of Vraja. He advises them that they must not abandon their husbands and families and embark on a relationship with a paramour such as Him, for that would put a serious stain on their reputation and would surely lead to a tremendous fall from Grace. He advises them it would be easier if they saved their reputations and simply returned to their homes and took to devotional practices such as hearing and singing about the Supreme Lord. The *Gopis* retorted that they had abandoned all to serve Him, alone, and that, in any case, the blissful Self of all had already stolen their minds and removed any delight that they may have had in family life. In fact, they advised Sri *Krsna* that if He persisted in sending them away they would attain association with His Lotus Feet through their already constant meditation and thus their bodies would be consumed in the fire of *tapas*. Those *Gopis* who had been unable to attend on Sri *Krsna* personally, perhaps because they had been shut in their homes by their concerned fam-

[1] "O Arunachala! Thou dost root out the egoity of those who think 'I am, verily, Arunachala!'" (from Arunachala Siva, translation and commentary by Dr T. M. P. Mahadevan, Tiruvannamalai, 2000)

ilies, gave up their bodies, all *karma* burnt up by the intense *tapas* of separation, and immediately attained Realisation of the Self.

Vivekacudamani

[The famous Sanskrit poem Vivekacudamani (The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination) dates from the 8th century and is attributed to Adi Shankara. In 580 verses, it explains the monistic philosophy of *Advaita Vedanta*. This is Miles' translation of the first 40 verses with his commentary.]

Introduction

1. The human condition; 2) the desire for liberation; and 3) abidance in the Supreme Self; these three things are indeed hard to achieve, and are attained only through the grace of God. (v3) Who could be more simple-minded than one who, having gained this human body, so difficult to attain, is then careless about pursuing the true aim of life? (v5) Let people quote the scriptures, let them make sacrifices to the gods, let them perform actions and let them worship the deities, but without understanding the unity of the Self, Liberation can never be accomplished - not even in the lifetime of one hundred *Brahmas* (i.e. a very long time – millions of years). (v6) It has been said (by the Wise) that one cannot expect to gain immortality by means of wealth (or

the actions made possible by wealth), so it is evident that liberation cannot be brought about by actions. (v7) Having given up all (claim to) actions (and the fruits thereof), and thus released from the bonds of worldly existence, the wise and intelligent should apply themselves to abidance in the Self. (v10) (It is only at this point that life's purpose attains fruition.)

Notes

The human condition is a condition of ignorance. It is an unquestioning acceptance of that which is apparently real for reality. When we talk in terms of suffering as did the Buddha, or illusion as did Ramana Maharshi, we are talking about the human condition. The buddha declared that there is an end to suffering and a way to achieve that end. Ramana Maharshi, in similar fashion, declared that the ignorance of illusion could be countered with the wisdom of Self-knowledge. To overcome this condition there is no need to renounce hearth and home and withdraw from the world. There is no need to convert to, or from, this, or that, religion. Merely substituting "I am a householder" for "I am a monk" is, in any case, of no avail. Instead discard both and remain, simply, as "I am". With the arising of the genuine desire for liberation, the realisation that Self Enquiry alone can reveal the truth will not be far behind.

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Action is for the purification of the mind, not for the attainment of Reality. Final emancipation comes through enquiry alone, and not through countless actions, no matter how perfect. (v11) (e.g.) One-pointed enquiry leads to the realisation of the reality of the rope, thus ending the distress, which was brought about by the fear of the (falsely perceived) great snake, caused by delusion. (v12) The best way to become resolute in purpose is by means of enquiry, not by ablutions or by endless donations or by hundreds of yogic breathing exercises etc. (v13) Achievement of the goal depends primarily on the fitness of the seeker. Things like time, place etc. are merely expedient means (aids) in this matter. (v14) Therefore, having approached the Guru who is the ocean of compassion and the true knower of *Brahman* (the Self), one who wishes to investigate his own nature should practice enquiry into the essential nature of the subject. (v15)

Habitual and latent tendencies of the mind (*vasanas*) create a smokescreen which appears to prevent the real Self from shining through. The action of Self Enquiry helps to clear this smokescreen away. Once recognised these habitual tendencies are gradually dispensed with. The practice of Enquiry brings one to the realisation that there is no individual self and therefore no possibility of either being bound by work or for that matter being freed by work. The attitude 'I-am-the-doer', shores up the ego and causes one to claim good fruits of the work and reject bad. An actor on the stage lives the life of his character without ever thinking he was that character. If he really believed he was the character, the 'I-am-the-doer' illusion would be detrimental to his mental health and would interfere in his acting role. Similarly our allotted role in life is not dependent on the 'I-am-the-doer' illusion and indeed benefits greatly from relinquishing this attitude.

Of course the result of losing the 'I-am-the-doer' attitude allows the inner reality to shine through unabated. As the sun shines and illuminates the earth whether or not the clouds are there so the Self illuminates the mind. As when the clouds are blown away the sun is revealed in all its glory so it is when the clouds of thoughts are blown away by the practice of Enquiry. There is nothing to be attained only everything to be revealed. Self Enquiry can be commenced at any time and in any stage of life. Let's be clear that the performance of action is not excluded in this. Any good action which is free from ambition and selfish desire, and which disciplines the behaviour of the 'individual' and hence becomes a boon to society as a whole, can aid one in the quest of Self-realisation.

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It is the wise and learned man, clear-sighted when considering an argument, who possesses the essential characteristics of one who is fit for Self Enquiry. (v16) He is considered fit for enquiring into *Brahman* who is discriminating and dispassionate, endowed with quietude and abstraction from the 'external' etc., and intent on liberation. (v17) The wise talk of the following four qualities which the aspirant must possess in order to attain firm abidance in the Self. Without these, success is impossible: (v18)

1) Discrimination between that which is Real and that which is unreal; this is the firm resolve that *Brahman*, alone, is real, and the world (as a separate reality) is unreal. (This is the crux of non-dual vision.)

2) Non-attachment to the enjoyment of the fruits of action, here and hereafter; this is the giving up of the desire for fleeting, embodied sensory pleasures, whether in this world or beyond this world, (whether in the present or in the future).

3) Attainment of the six qualities, namely; a) quietude (of mind), b) self-control (of body), c) withdrawal, d) forbearance, e) faith, f) concentration;

a) quietude is the continual fixing of the mind at its root, rendering it free again and again, while understanding the futility of the objects of sense.

b) self-control is said to be the turning back of the senses from objects, both internal and external, and fixing of the senses at their root.

c) withdrawal is not pandering to mindstuff (i.e. either outward or inward movements of the mind).

d) forbearance is said to be the endurance of sorrows without reaction and without mental dis-ease (unease).

e) faith, which is the means to Self-realisation, is developing a genuine conviction of the truth of the scriptures and the guru's words.

f) concentration is fixing the mind on the pure *Brahman* at all times, not merely as an indulgement of the mind but with a view to becoming steady in all six qualities.

4) the desire for Liberation is the intense wish to be free, by awakening to one's own true nature, and ending bonds such as the 'I am the body' idea and its attendants 'I, me and mine' which are fabrications of ignorance. (v19-27)

This desire for Liberation, although it may be weak or mediocre, can still bear fruit, through the six qualities mentioned. (v28) But for one in whom there is dispassion and a very strong desire for Liberation, these six qualities will bring quick success. (v29) However where there is a weakness and indifference, in both dispassion and the desire for liberation, a mere appear-

ance of quietude, and such like, will have as much substance as a mirage in the desert. (v30)

Notes

Lack of discrimination results in the dual vision of self and other, subject and object, seer and seen. In effect we look on a mirage-like world and believe it is real. This is the human condition which is entirely dependent on separation into name and form. Discrimination is the key to restoring true balance in our life. Lack of discrimination leads to a fruitless search for a happiness which is outside of a posited ego-I – yet attainable in the realm of the senses. Rather than hankering after the pleasures we are told we should want, real happiness is the realisation that absence of sorrow is found simply by abiding as we truly.

Instead we allow the ceaseless pull of a weak mind in turmoil, running here and there after this and that fleeting pleasure, all the while believing that the next attainment will make life just right. In truth, of course, no sooner do we achieve one pleasure than another is desired, ad infinitum. These are indeed fleeting pleasures. Can true happiness ever come from such fleeting pleasures? Non-attachment is having the strength of mind to overcome such a weakness. The six qualities, as will be seen as our text progresses, train the mind and body, slowly and resolutely, to reach a hitherto unknown level of concentration which has a cleansing effect on the mind. Hence the Self shines through without obstacle.

The desire for Liberation is strengthened by attending to, and nurturing, these six qualities. For one who is resolute of purpose, who has learned to discriminate between the Self and not-self, who has given up rushing after the fleeting fruits of action and the subsequent claiming of the good results, and denial of the bad, success is certainly assured.

Bhakti – Devotion

Of all the means of Liberation, *bhakti* is, indeed, the most important. It has been said (by the wise), that "*Bhakti* is enquiry into one's own true nature." (v31) Further it has been said that this is (in essence) an enquiry into the truth of the Self. He who possesses the qualities mentioned above (in the introduction), and who desires to know the truth of the Self, should approach

a sage Guru capable of loosening the fetters (of the human condition). (v32) He (the Guru) should be conversant in sacred lore, unpretentious, unaffected by desire, a most excellent knower of *Brahman*, at peace in *Brahman*, and quiescent like a glowing fire which has spent its fuel. He is a boundless ocean of compassion and the friend of those noble souls who are ready to surrender. (v33)

Notes

The path of *bhakti* is open to everyone. At some point, for all who are afflicted by this human condition, irrespective of their worldly status, at a time when contentment seems to be out of one's control, an appeal to a higher power is overtly, or covertly, made. A desire to understand the truth of the Self, spontaneously, arises. This is the working of grace. Gradually the mind of the seeker, purified by his longing for truth, becomes less interested in satisfying his worldly desires, and more and more interested in the quest for truth. At this point, grace begins to manifest itself in the form of Guru, the outward manifestation of the Self. Initially the teaching may be introduced in an appropriate book. Then, when the time is right, association with a human guru whose mere presence facilitates peace of mind and a spontaneous feeling of respect, will still the mind and turn it inwards. The qualifications of the outer Guru mentioned above are very important and should be noted very carefully. The Guru's actions are always selfless and he stimulates selfless action in society as a whole. He never sees any difference between himself and others and is completely free from the egotistical notion that he has been singled out for enlightenment.

The duty of the seeker

Having approached that Guru with devotion, and having worshipped him (in the prescribed manner), pleasing him with prostrations, service and humility of speech, (the devotee) should ask about that which must be learned, i.e. Self Enquiry, (in the following way): (v34)

“O Master, O Friend of the people who have surrendered, I bow down to you. O Ocean of Compassion, I have fallen into the sea of bondage, rescue me with your straight glance of Grace (which is like a stout stick stretched towards a drowning man). By showering down the (cooling) nectar of your absolute compassion, (v35) (quench) the hard to quench, scorching heat of

the fire of *samsara*, which is continuously fanned by the fickle winds of fate. I am terrified, I have approached you, protect me from death. I know of no other who will grant me protection. (v36) Great and noble sages (such as you) live constantly in peace, like the season of Spring, looking after the welfare of all. Having themselves crossed the fearful, waters of worldly existence, they lead others across without any selfish motive. (v.37) It is, indeed, the nature of great souls to dispel the distress of others, as the cooling rays of the moon gently assuage the earth which has been scorched by the heat of the fierce rays of the sun. (v.38) Pour down your immortal words, imbued with the pure, cool, blissful essence of *Brahman*. They are emitted *(ujjhita)* from your lips as if poured (directly) from the pitcher of *Sabdabrahman*, a delight to the ear. O Lord, I am tormented by this human condition which is like the flames of a forest fire. Blessed are those who have received even a passing glance from your eyes. (v39) How can I cross (overcome) this sea of birth and death? What should I do? Which means should I employ? I know nothing! O Lord, save me by your grace! Show me how to remove this pain of *samsara*!" (v40) Having spoken in this way (i.e. appropriately, with an attitude of surrender), (the disciple) distressed by the fires of *samsara*, takes refuge (with the Guru).

Notes

The perpetual outflow of mind towards objects of sense causes great trepidation. The mind must be reigned in in order to establish peace. In order to do this surrender of the ego is essential. Appropriate mental attitude must be cultivated. For example, excessive speech should be controlled. In these days of mobile phones and endless pointless conversations/texts, one can see the level of absurdity to which man has aspired. This frittering away of mental energy merely perpetuates the human condition and stimulates the endless chitter chatter of the uncontrolled mind.

Fortunately the rejuvenating inner depth of mental silence is available to everyone even amidst the noise of daily life. In order to understand this we turn to a guide who has found and acted on the ultimate solution to the hustle and bustle of daily life.

Regarding the appropriate attitude that one should have towards the Guru or the Self, Ramana Maharshi, the great 20th Century Indian Saint, has this to

say, “Surrender to Him and abide by His will whether He appears or vanishes; await His pleasure. If you ask Him to do as you please that is not surrender but command to Him. You cannot have Him obey you and yet think that you have surrendered. He knows what is best and when and how to do it. Leave everything entirely to Him. His is the burden; you have no longer any cares. All your cares are His. Such is surrender. This is *Bhakti*.” (Talk 450)

Guru and the Self are one and the same. Nowadays it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish between the real teacher of knowledge and the charlatan. It seems in all walks of life experts are declared based on bank balance and waist measurement rather than ability. This is not important. What is important is to cultivate an inner attitude of surrender to the Self which will stimulate the dissipation of the endless clouds of thought which prevent the inner Self from shining through unabated. The true Guru teaches from within and if and when it is necessary that inner guide will present an appropriate outer manifestation to help you. All at the appropriate time.

The word ‘guru’ is commonly used to refer to any type of teacher whether of ‘life-style’, of ‘fitness’, or of ‘economics’, etc. Our parents or other family elders could also be referred to as ‘guru’. The definition of ‘Guru’ needed in the context here is more specific.

Guru is the outward manifestation of the Truth of Self which persuades the outward going mind to turn inwards. An oft-used example is the Sage *Dattatreya* who had many gurus - not all human - including animals and the forces of nature. To one who has opened to the possibility of such instruction the particular form that the guru takes is not essential. The sun, the moon, the earth, the mountain, the sky, the river, the ocean, the humble sparrow, the majestic eagle, etc., in fact, all of nature, has the ability to stop the mind dead and reveal, spontaneously, that sublime inner quietude. For most people however the human Guru has an important place. He is like the deer used to decoy another deer.

The function of the Guru is not merely to expound doctrine. The Guru switches the minds predilection for habitual outward movement to a harmonious inner movement; from the illusion of ego-self to the realization of Universal Self. The outer Guru reflects the inner Guru who dwells in the

Heart. Guru is not an egotistical device used to hoodwink the unwary. The one who stands up and says "I am the Guru" is in fact a fool. To follow such a one is to pander to egotistical arrogance. It has been said that the true Guru must appear at the appropriate time although we may not recognise him initially. For the Guru there is absolutely no guru-disciple relationship.

For the disciple who craves instruction there certainly is such a relationship. In this we must remember that Guru is pure guidance without ulterior motive. In appropriate context God, Guru, and Self are synonymous.

Additional note to Vivecadumanani v31 & 32

Svasvarupanusamdhanam bhaktirityabhidhiyate.
Svatmatattvanusamdhanam bhaktirityapare joguh.

(Vivekacudamani 31,32, quoted in Talks 274 and 642)

Reflecting by constant enquiry into the true nature of one's own form is called "*Bhakti*".

Others say investigation into the principle of one's own nature is "*Bhakti*".

svasvarupa means 'true nature'.
svatmatattva means 'principle of one's nature'.

In the second case the "*Atman*" is seen as an abstract concept to be investigated requiring subject and object (indirect investigation). In the first it is the fundamental state of being and not an abstract concept. No object required (direct investigation). The first should be the attitude of the *vicharin*.

At first glance this might be seen as a subtle and philosophical distinction. However this is a fundamental point of importance.

"1. Discrimination between the real and the unreal.

2. Disinclination to enjoy the fruits of one's actions either in this or in any future life.

3. The six virtues of tranquility, self control, withdrawal, forbearance, faith, and concentration of the Self.

4. Intense yearning for liberation.

Of all the means leading to liberation, *bhakti* or devotion is the best; and this *bhakti* means seeking the truth of one's own Self – so say the sages."

(excerpted from Ramana Maharshi's translation of Vivekacudamani as it appears in Arunachala's Ramana, Volume 1, p. 242)

Noticing the to-ing and fro-ing of the mind, the vigilant one immediately practices *vichara*. But the quieted mind, having no distractions, has no need to practice.

The Heart Sutra

[The Heart Sutra, or Sutra of Supreme Wisdom, is one of the best-known Buddhist sutras of Mahayana Buddhism. It is one of the shortest of the *Prajnaparamita* texts (*prajna*: "wisdom" and *paramita*: literally "other shore" in the sense of perfection) and is considered to be their essence.]

The Heart Sutra is the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara's advice to śāriputra. It comprises the essence of Buddhism in a short sweet nugget-like form.

The Sutra

The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, deeply immersed in the practice of transcendent wisdom, looking upon the five *skandhas* (form, sensation, perception, *samskãras*, and consciousness), saw that they are empty in essence (i.e. devoid of self-nature).

The Bodhisattva said:

"Hey śāriputra! Right here! Right now! - Form is not separate from emptiness - emptiness is not separate from form. Form is indeed emptiness, emptiness is indeed form.

It is exactly the same with sensation, perception, impulse and consciousness.

Hey śāriputra! Right here! Right now! – All things are characteristically empty - they neither begin nor end; they are neither stained nor pure; they neither increase nor decrease. Therefore in emptiness there is no form, no sensation, no perception, no impulse, no consciousness.

No eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind. No ideas of form, sound, odour, taste, no objects to be touched. No realm of sight nor even realm of mindstuff.

There is no ignorance, no loss of ignorance, no old age and death, no end of old age and death

There is no suffering, no origination of suffering, no cessation of suffering, no path that leads to the cessation of suffering (cf. Four Noble Truths).

There is no knowledge, no attainment, no non-attainment. Because there is no attainment for the Bodhisattva, having relied on the practice of transcendent wisdom, he wanders unobstructed by fetters of mind.

Since there is no mindstuff, he has gone beyond any errant travesty of mind, without fear, he has reached the *nirvāna* abode.

All Buddhas, established in all three times, past, present and future, having relied on the unsurpassed *prajñāpāramitā*, have awoken to the complete enlightenment of the Buddha.

Therefore one should ponder the truth of the great mantra of *prajñāpāramitā*, the mantra of great wisdom, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra without equal, the mantra that ends suffering.

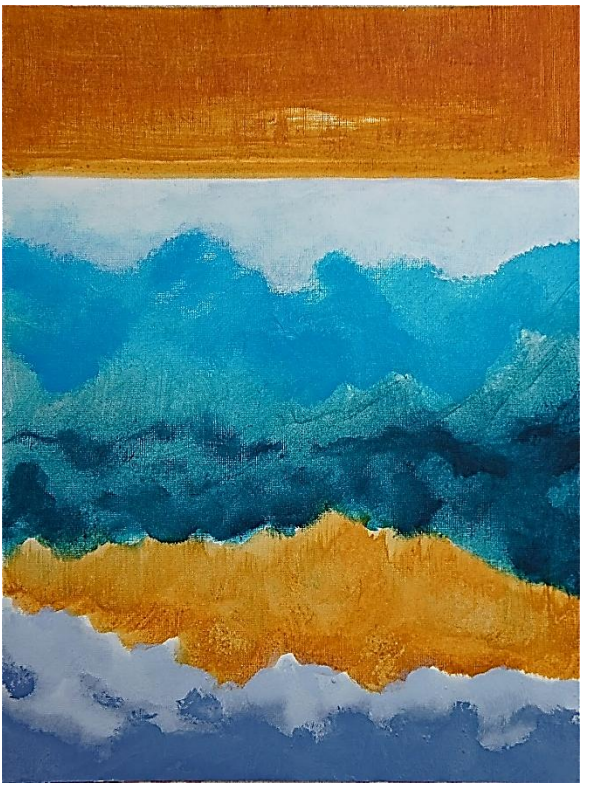
It is true because it is the essence of all that is not false! The prajñāpāramitā mantra is spoken as follows:

गते गते पारगते पारसंगते बोधि स्वाहा

"gate gate pāragate pārasamgate bodhi svāhā"

"Gone! Gone! Safely across! United, abiding on the Other Shore!
Enlightenment! Ah!! Blessing indeed!"

The Gayatri Mantra



ॐ भूर् भुवः स्वः तत् सवितुर्वरेण्यं
भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात्॥

Om bhur bhuvah svah tat savitur varenyam bhargo
devasya dhimahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayat

"Let us meditate on that excellent glory of the divine vivifying Sun,
May he enlighten our understandings."

(transl. Monier-Williams[1])

[1] more translations see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gayatri_Mantra

[The Gayatri Mantra was translated in many ways. Unfortunately, the translation of Miles is not available.]

The Gayatri Mantra, Rigveda 3.62.10, worships *Brahman*, or Self, as the life essence manifested in the live-giving light of the sun. As the world is reliant on the sun so the individual is reliant on the Self. Traditionally, one initiated into the Gayatri Mantra evokes the presence of dawn, noon, and at sunset. It is also used while kindling the sacrifice fire, sitting facing the sun and more generally nowadays for *japa*.

Ramana Maharshi, when asked for *japa* which is good for stilling the mind, commented, "Anything suitable, such as Gayatri … Only those who cannot do it look for others. It contains the whole range of truth in it." Then he said, "Chanting (*japa*) will lead to *dhyana* (meditation) and it is the means for realizing the Self … It must be done always, or as long as you can." (Talk 322)

The mantra should be chanted with understanding of the meaning. It is not used for personal gain but is rather an immediate focus on the Self (*Brahman*) within the Heart. Originally it would be repeated with correct intonation and meter. In the present age when knowledge of Vedic Sanskrit is scant for most of us, attendance to purity of purpose is of primary importance. Since the grammarian Panini there has been evidence to show shift and variation in Sanskrit dialect(s), therefore avoidance of *apabhramsha* (corrupt use of language) is very difficult. The grammarian Bhartrhari however has pointed out that all language comes from and returns to *Sabdabrahman*. Therefore conscientious use of mantra with concentration of purpose is all that is required. In the ultimate analysis language traces back to *svabhavana* (our innate being).

Eka Sloki – Ramana's Verse on the Heart

hṛd (Heart), below: hrdaya kuhara madhye
(In the centre of the heart-cave),
acrylic on canvas, 2010

[The Eka Sloki by Ramana Maharshi is a one stanza poem which contains the essence of his teaching. Eka = one, Eka Sloki = one stanza]

In the second chapter of Sri Ramana Gita, Sri Bhagavan gives, in four lines of Sanskrit, the essence of His teaching.

hRdayakuharamadhye kevalaM brahmamAtraM
hyahamahamiti sAkshAdAtmarUpeNa bhAti |
hRdi viSa manasA svaM cinvatA majjatA vA
pavanacalanarodhAdAtmanishTho bhava tvam ||

(Ramana Gita 2.2)

In the inmost core, the Heart
Shines as *Brahman* alone,

As ‘I-I’, the Self aware.
Enter deep into the Heart
By searching for Self, or diving deep,
Or with breath under check.
Thus abide ever in *Atman*.’

(Bhagavan’s English translation as reported by Arthur Osborne in ‘Collected Works’)

Hridayam – hRt + ayam - means ‘this is the Heart [or Centre]’, so says Sri Ramana Maharshi.

‘*ayam’* is used to talk of what is present - here and now. The word can derive from two stems - ‘a’ and ‘i’. From these two stems we get 1) ‘atra’ - ‘here’ and ‘in this’; 2) ‘iha’ - ‘here’ or ‘in this world’.

A Selection of Translations

In the Centre of the heart-cave, *Brahman* alone shines, in the form of the *Atman*, with direct immediacy as "I, I". Enter into the Heart with questing mind or by diving deep, with breath controlled, and abide, simply, as the Self! (trans. Miles)

Brahman is glowing lustrously in the middle of the cave of the Heart in the shape of the Self, always proclaiming “I am, I am”. Become an *Atmanishtha*, a Self-Realised person, either by making the mind absorbed in the search for the Self or by making the mind drown itself through the control of breath. (translation found on p. 232 of ‘Letters from Ramanasramam’)

In the centre of the Heart-Cave there shines alone the one *Brahman* as the 'I-I', the *Atman*. Reach the Heart by diving deep in quest of the Self, or by controlling the mind with breath, and stay established in the *Atman*. (from Reality in 40 verses supplement; trans. K. Swaminathan)

Inside the cave of the Heart the Pure and Infinite Being Himself shines as the Self, the limitless I. Enter thou the Heart, diving by Quest of the Self or by holding the breath and thus be one with the Self. (from K. Lakshmana Sarma's 'Sri Ramana Hrdayam')

In the interior of the Heart-cave there shines alone the One *Brahman* as ‘I-I’, the self-conscious *Atman*. Realize that State of steadfast inherence in the

Self, entering into the Heart either by diving deep within through Self Enquiry or by the submergence of the mind through breath-control. *(*from Supplement to the Forty Verses as found in 'Collected Works', edit. Arthur Osborne)

In the Heart's Cavity, the sole *Brahman*
as an ever-persisting I
shines direct in the form of the Self.
Into the Heart enter thyself, with mind in search
or in deeper plunge
or by restraint of life-movement
be firmly poised in the Self.

(in Sat Darshana Bhashya by Kapila Sastriar; Bhashya of verse 1, p. 49)

There is some Controversy

regarding Sri Ramana's comments on the physical manifestation of the Heart. And ... confusion! There really need be none.

What is one's perspective right now? Is it that of the *jnani*? If so then the omnipresent Heart, the Centre, without circumference, exists right here, **'in this'** (cf. Talk 273). However, if one operates from the position of a limited centre, here, 'in the world' (cf. Talk 97) then what is the justification for arguing over Sri Ramana's words.

Which is your perspective? Honestly!

In Chapter 10 of his book 'Reflections on Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi', while commenting on Talk 29, S. S. Cohen elucidates, "To the highly critical mind there appears a contradiction in the statements of Bhagavan, who on the one hand makes Heart to be everywhere and nowhere, and on the other fixes it in the right chest, from which the *sushumna nadi* rises, and where the *jiva* retires in sleep, etc. The apparent contradiction is due to the perception."

The three Methods for Realization of the Self

The verse reveals the Self and three methods for the Realisation of the Self which encompass *Jnana*, *Bhakti* and Yoga.

hrdayakuharamadhye kevalam brahmamAtram

In the interior cave of the Heart, *Brahman* alone shines, no more-no less. This Heart is the seat of the Self. This Heart is none other than *Brahman*. You are always in the Heart. You are, indeed, this Heart. This is the Self. In truth the Self is without location... but in order to help the *sadhaka* and to give direction, in His compassion, Sri Bhagavan has pointed us towards the middle of our being.

"The Heart is not physical; it is spiritual. *Hridayam* = hrit + ayam = This is the centre. It is that from which thoughts arise, on which they subsist and where they are resolved. The thoughts are the content of the mind and, they shape the universe. The Heart is the centre of all.

Yatova imani bhutani jayante (that from which these beings come into existence) etc. is said to be *Brahman* in the *Upanishads*. That is the Heart. *Brahman* is the Heart." (Talk 97)

We should not allow ourselves to be drawn by distinctions of physical and spiritual. The physical is entirely dependent on the spiritual. The spiritual is never dependent on the physical (i.e. the distinction is simply false perception). Although referred to as Heart centre, this is entirely without centre or circumference; everything, body and all else, exists within it.

"This space within the Heart is as vast as the (physical) space outside. Indeed, within it are both heaven and earth; fire and air; sun and moon; lightning and stars. Whatever is in this world and whatever is not ... all that is established within it." (Chandogya Upanishad, 8.1.3)

hyahamahamiti sAkshAdAtmarupeNa bhAti |

As 'I', as 'I', the Self aware; Self-evidently shining. Continuous and uninterrupted.

D.: "What is the Heart?"

M.: "It is the seat (if such could be said of it) of the Self."

D.: "Is it the physical heart?"

M.: "No. It is the seat wherefrom 'I' - 'I' arises." (Talk 52)

Can we recognise/experience the Self in the body? Yes we can. *Atma vichara* is the key. Once unlocked the 'I' - 'I' consciousness shines forth directly, unobstructed.

hrdi viSa manasA svam cinvatA majjatA vA
pavanacalanarodhAdAtmanishTho bhava tvam ||

How do we submerge the mind in the Heart? Three methods are suggested. Quest for Self: This is *Jnana*. Diving deep: This is *bhakti*. Attraction of/to the Self with or without attributes. Breath control: This is the path of Yoga. In essence, all three are resolved in the action of *atma vichara*, Self Enquiry. "Thus abide ever in *Atman*."

From Untruth to Truth

[The *Pavamana* Mantra (*pavamana* meaning "being purified, strained") is an ancient Indian mantra from the Brihadaranyaka Upaniṣad.]

असतो मा सद्गमय ।
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
मृत्योर् मामृतं गमय ।

asato mā sadgamaya,
tamaso mā jyotirgamaya,
mṛtyor mā'mṛtaṃ gamaya,

From untruth lead me to truth,
From darkness lead me to light,
From death lead me to immortality.

Note

Where truth is ... falsehood is not. *Brahman* is truth. The Self cannot be attained without practising truth. Suffering is the result of false relationships, false fears, false ideas. Liberation is truth.

How is this liberation realised? Through right action of mind, speech and body. That is *jnana*, that is freedom, that is *moksha*. Self Enquiry is constant truth. Maintaining the quest even in the midst of worldly duties ensures right action.

Om vacadbhuve namah

The transformation begins with speech

yathā somyai kena mrtpindena sarvam mrnmayam vijñātam
syādvācārambhanam vikāro nāmadheyam mrttiketyeva satyam ||

(Chandogya Upanishad, 6.1.4)

"O gentle sir, as by knowing a lump of earth everything made of earth becomes known, the transformation begins with speech. It is name only. In fact, 'earth' is the reality."

na so 'sti pratyayo loke yah śabdānugamād rte |
anuviddham iva jñānam sarvam śabdena bhāsate ||

(Bhartrhari's Vakyapadiya 1.123)

"In this world, there is no cognition which does not follow language. All knowledge appears as if permeated by words."

api prayoktur ātmānau śabdam antaravasthitam |
prāhur mahāntam rsabham yena sāyujyam isyate ||

tasmād yah śabdasamskārah sā siddhih paramātmanah |
tasya pravrttitattvajñas tad brahmāmrtam aśnute ||

(VP[1] 1.130-131)

"It is also said that the self of the speaker is the word situated within, **the Great Bull** with whom one desires union. Therefore that which purifies the word is attainment of the Supreme Self. He, who knows the truth of its origin, attains the immortal *Brahman*."

The mantra "**om vacadbhuve namah**", intuited by Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni, reiterates Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's teaching of *Atma Vichara* (Self Enquiry).

The Guru mantra, "**om vacadbhuve nama"**', can be translated as **"Bow to that 'place' of Being from whence the Word arises (and sets)"**. The head bows and relinquishes the ego. The Muni has stated that mantra must be

[1] VP = Bhartrhari's Vakyapadiya

repeated with full understanding of its meaning. In this instance, understanding the mantra equates with the enquiry "Who am I?"

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, *Adiguru*, the Great Bull, is the secret import of this mantra.

The Origin of the Mantra 'om vacadbhuve namaḥ'

ॐ वचद्भुवे नमः

Chapter 18, verse 10 of Sri Ramana Gita – notes below based on Ganapati Muni's 'gurumantrabhāshyam', also known as 'anubandham 2' (Sri Ramana Gita, p. 116)

In this verse, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni, as Seer, reveals the *bIjAksharas* (seed syllables and/or letters)[1] which make up Sri Ramana Maharshi's special mantra. This mantra reveals various correspondences and the Muni has said that it is endowed with *Sakti* (power).

vedAdi*:* beginning (and end) of the *Vedas*, *bIja* '**om**'

pAka damana (indra) Uttara*:* mightier than *Indra*, the subduer of the demon called PAka (symbolic of the overcoming of ignorance). Sri Maharshi lies beyond even the Lord of the senses [*Indra*]. Lord *Indra's bIja* is 'la'. When we go beyond this we find... bIja '**va**'

kacchapeSa – kurmeSa: Lord of tortoises, supporter of the Earth and all its *jIvas*, K*urma's bIja* is '**ca**'

dharAdhara*:* the Hill, Mount Arunachala, The Hill of Dawn. Supporter of the Universe. Epithet of *Siva* and symbolic of transcendence. (note: *dharAdhara* is also an epithet of *Vishnu* as preserver), *bIja* '**d**'

sushupti: known as sleep. Here it represents *Sakti*, bIja '**bha**' (note: the vowel 'a' is omitted.)

amareSvara*:* Lord of Gods (*Rudra*) *bIja* '**u**'

amRta-toyabIja*:* water, syllable of offering signifying dative case (along with next letter) '**v'**

[1] *Bija* Mantra: seed mantra, seed syllable; mantra consisting of only one syllable. The syllable stands for a word.

sUkshmAmRtA*: Siva Sakti*. bIja **'e'**

praNatyA (pra-Nati): obeisance/surrender of body and mind with humility, '**namaH**'

Altogether this reveals the Guru mantra – **om vacadbhuve namaH'** – and it means "**Obeisance to that 'place' of Being from whence the Word arises (and sets)**".

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is described as the secret import of this mantra, so it is understood by the Wise.

"In this world, there is no cognition which does not follow language. All knowledge appears as if permeated by words." "...that which purifies the word is the attainment of the Supreme Self. He, who knows the truth of its origin, attains the immortal *Brahman*." (from the Vakyapadiya of Bhartrhari, Kanda 1)

This is the secret of Ramana consciousness, i.e. it is the place prior to the aberration that 'I am' and words inevitably bring with them. This place of being from whence the word arises is Ramana's Silence. *Vichara* leads to it.

A Sloka for Invoking the Presence

[The *Dhyana Sloka*, by Ganapati Muni in Sri Ramana Gita, 18.13 invokes Bhagavan's Presence.]

Sri Bhagavan approved this verse (18.13) as *dhyana* sloka of the whole Ramana Gita. Sri Vasishtha Ganapati Muni's wonderful verse, came from direct realisation of the Divine Nature of Sri Bhagavan. As such, it is a fitting vehicle of Grace which undoubtedly invokes the presence of Sri Bhagavan.

निलखान्द्सुहदा सदृशं प्रसादे
तुल्यं तथामहसि तोयज बान्धवेन |
बराह्मयां स्थितो तु पितरं वटमूलवासं
संस्मारयन्त मचल तमनुस्मरामः॥

nīlāravindasuhṛdā sadṛśaṃ prasāde
tulyaṃ tathāmahasi toyaja bāndhavena |
brāhmyāṃ sthitau tu pitaraṃ vaṭamūlavāsaṃ
saṃsmārayantamacalaṃ tamanusmarāmaḥ ||

nīla: blue, black, dark-coloured

aravinda: water-lily

suhṛdā (ins.): friend

sadṛśaṃ: resembles

prasāde: in His soothing gift of Grace

tulyaṃ: like manner, similarly

mahasi: in greatness, might, splendour

toyaja: 'water-born', lotus

bāndhavena (ins.): kinsman, relation

brāhmyāṃ: (loc.) Brahmic state

sthitau (loc.): abidance, remaining in

pitaraṃ: father

vaṭamūlavāsaṃ: living under the Banyan tree

saṃsmārayantam: reminding

acalaṃ: unmoving, mountain

tam: Him

anusmarāmaḥ: we devotedly remember

"In His soothing gift of Grace, He resembles the moon, the friend of the blue water-lily. In like manner, in splendour, He resembles the sun, the kinsman of the lotus. In His firm abidance in *Brahman*, He reminds us of His Father (*Dakshinamurti*), living under the Banyan tree. We devotedly remember Him, the unmoving one." (Sri Arunachalaramana, the Vicaravatara)

Commentary

Irrespective of one's self perception of advancement on the spiritual path, Sri Ramana sits, open and welcoming. Whether one bathes in the reflected light or in the direct light of *Brahman* He showers His Grace. Unmoving, yet eternally compassionate, even now, His glance of Grace consoles those

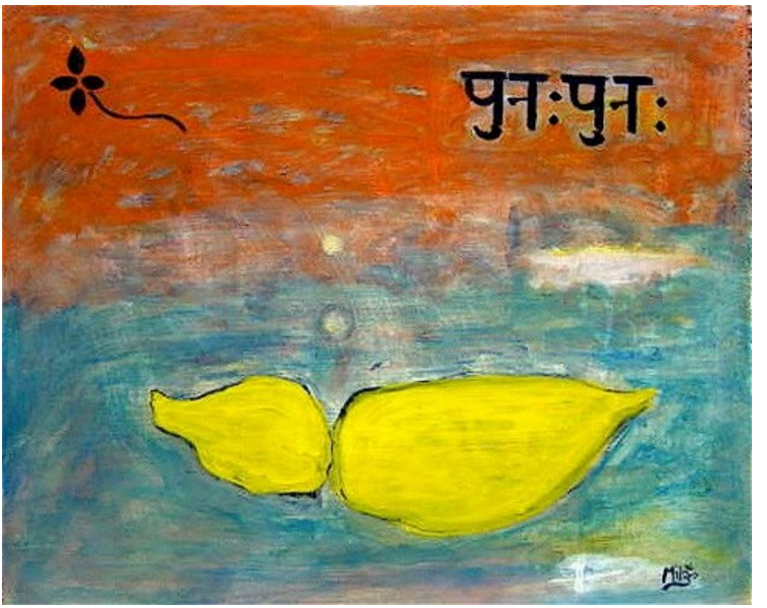
afflicted by the human condition. His Silence deafens the myriad thoughts of man. Unmoving, the epitome of Self-understanding, he calls us inwards...*'Aham*'-'*Aham*', 'I'-'I'.

In response to the question, "How is it that *Atma vidya* is said to be the easiest?" He replies: "Any other *vidya* requires a knower, knowledge and the object to be known, whereas this does not require any of them. It is the Self. Can anything be so obvious as that? Hence it is the easiest. All that you need do is enquire, 'Who am I?' A man's true name is *mukti*." (Talk 551)

Let us turn towards His soothing gift of Grace. Let us knowingly bathe in His graceful glance of *Jnana*. That, Sri Arunachala Ramana, is none other than the Lord, who is the Self, compassionately dwelling within the Heart of each and every one of us.

"All that you need do is enquire, 'Who am I?'"

Ekakarna Samhita – 1



punah, punah, again and again, now, now, enough, enough

[This is one of the projects started by Miles. It was not completed. Samhita means ‘collection of texts’, Ekakarna means ‘one-eared’.]

Consciousness alone is eternal, without beginning or end. It is said, “This Self must be seen”, “one must hear about it."

Now... Undifferentiated identity exists always, separation, into things, does not.

Like a bubble rising in the ocean under the influence of the wind, this momentary, transitory world arises from the Self.

All of this universe is a mere manifestation totally reliant on the Supreme Self. It is the assumption of the One, without losing its One-ness, through apparent diversity, of separate unreal forms.

As in a dream, according to will, one creates many, but on awaking there is only one, so it is with this universe.

As a snake appears like rope, or oyster shell like silver, so this universe is seen to unfold from the Supreme Self. When the knowledge of the rope is obtained, the illusion of the snake is no longer manifest. Similarly with the knowledge of the Self, this universe, which exists merely as illusion, goes.

Entirely dependent on the power of Time, which has small divisions superimposed on it, are the six kinds of activity, beginning with production (production/birth, existence, transformation, growth, decay, and destruction/death), (these are) the origins of the divisions in Being.

Birth through to death belong to the body, not to the Self, like the phases of the moon, caused imperceptibly by this power of Time.

Though apparently in the body, the wise one is never of the body, like one awakened from a dream. Although not in the body, the foolish one is apparently of the body, like one seeing in a dream.

On Bhartrhari's Vakyapadiya

Miles Wright:
Grammar as the Door to Liberation,
a Problem for the Modern Scholar?
An Exploration of the Metaphysical Rationale
at the Heart of Bhartrhari's Vākyapadiya,
University of Edinburgh, 2000

anādinidhanam brahma śabdatattvam yadaksaram /
vivartate 'rthabhāvena prakriyā jāgato yatah //

ekameva yadāmnātam bhinnam śaktivyapāśrayāt /
aprthaktve 'pi śaktibhyah prthaktveneva vartate //

adhyāhitakalām yasya kālaśaktimupāśritāh /
janmādayo vikārāh sad bhāvabhedasya yonayah //

ekasya sarvabijasya yasya ceyamanekadhā /

bhoktrbhoktavyarupena bhogarupena ca sthitih //

(*VP;* I, 1 - 4)

1. Brahman, which is without a beginning and an end, the essence of language,[1] the imperishable syllable (OM), from which the world-process 'appears to unfold'[2] through a transformation into objects.

2. Which, celebrated as neither more nor less than One, becomes fragmented because of recourse to (its denotating) potentiality.[3] Although undifferentiated it behaves as if differentiated because of its (denotative) potentials.

[1] *cf. yāvad brahma visthitam tāvati vāk*. *RV*, X. 114, 8.
[2] The vivarta vs. parināma controversy, which requires discussion, will be approached later on.
[3] Śakti must be understood as referring to both the potential and the power itself dependent on level of description.

3. Dependent on the power of time, which has small divisions superimposed on it, are the six kinds of verbal activity,[1] beginning with production (production, existence, transformation, growth, decay, and destruction), [these are] the origins of the divisions in Being.

4. The One, the seed of all, to whom this multiplicity belongs, remains in the form of the enjoyer, that which is enjoyed, and the enjoyment.

Introduction

Bhartrhari's *magnum opus*, the *Vākyapadiya*, elucidates the fundamental importance of understanding the relationship between language, thought and reality. The fruit of this understanding is described in the *VP* as "*...dvāramapavargasya.*"[2] From the outset Bhartrhari restates the importance of the purpose (*prayojana*) of *Vyākarana* and discusses both goal and origin as communicated by the great seers. Unfortunately, within these first few kārikās, a problem appears for the scholar. A problem which is typified in Houben's question "...But what would happen if we were to take first other parts of the *VP* into account and return next to these introductory kārikās?" (1995: 15)[3] Houben's problem, which is revealed as an aversion to *śabdādvaita*, and his conclusion "...that Bhartrhari (in expounding linguistic monism) did so in a rather incomplete and unsatisfactory way..." (1995; 14) remain vague and unsubstantiated. Within the domain of the *VP*, there can be no justification in making the assumption that the meaning of the introductory kārikās could change retrospectively, nor can Houben's statement, in parentheses (1995; 15), which suggests that its attention to grammatical issues might negate the validity of a central position within the *VP* being attributed to *śabdādvaita,* be unequivocally accepted. Bhartrhari's comments on the particulars of language phenomenon are permeated by the essentials of his metaphysics. His comments on everyday language usage can themselves (and should) be studied at the metaphysical level as well as the empirical. From the outset, if an academic model relegates the metaphysical premise of the

[1] This verse refers to the six kinds of activity in general (birth etc.) and to verbal activity in particular, without which there can be no manifestation of divisions in Being.

[2] *VP* I. 14

[3] Houben, Jan. E, M., *The Sambanda-samuddeśa*, (Egbert Forsen, 1995)

VP to a secondary role, there must be a fundamental misunderstanding of the integral nature of the *VP*, with the corollary that the overall interpretation becomes problematic. The metaphysical aspect is primary. Sabdabrahman is primary. The mind (of the scholar), it seems, welcomes complexity before simplicity. Complexity allows division. Division allows analysis of components. This is empirical and therefore palpable. This is the survival mechanism for *ahamkāra*. But is this a valid methodology for the *VP*? The answer undoubtedly is yes, if we are studying at the empirical level (i.e. superficially) of the sentence (vākya), the word (pada) and the phoneme (varna) and it is at just this level, that Houben has performed a great service in presenting '*The Sambandha Samuddeśa*', the chapter on relation. His study equates well with the mood of the Western Linguist. However the answer must be no, if we are pursuing Bhartrhari's ultimate fruit of Grammar.[1] The ultimate fruit cannot be understood in terms of parts in isolation, because parts, Bhartrhari tells us, are never more than convenient fictions. It is in this respect that we must initially pay careful attention to the first few *kārikās* which must be borne in mind while analysing even at grosser levels otherwise we will miss the subtleties of concepts such as *mukhyasattā* and *upacārā*[2] as each resolves itself into something wider than its immediate environs. It should be noted that Houben cites the following passage from Iyer in a bid to support his conclusion. Iyer, summing up *The Vākyapadiya in Light of Ancient Commentaries*, writes,

> "...there are gaps in our information relating to the details of the process of the manifestation of the cosmos from the Brahman-Śabdatattva and of its merging into it. One gets the impression

[1] The following parable comes to mind: A man was going through the forest when he was ambushed by an enemy and shot with a poisoned arrow. One of his kin stumbled upon him and raised the alarm and soon others arrived with antidotes to the poison. As they attempted to pull the arrow prior to applying the healing ointment the man prevented them and began to ask various questions such as, "Who was that enemy?; What was his family?; Was he tall?; What colour was his hair?; What kind of bow did he use?; What was the arrow made of? Etc. ..." When it was suggested that the questions were irrelevant in the present situation and that without application of the healing herbs he would die he just continued to prevent treatment intent on gathering maximum information. Needless to say ... the cure was not effected. The man died.

[2] Primary and Secondary Being.

> that Bhartrhari believed that it was a cyclic process, but the cycle is nowhere described in detail. The fact is that he never forgets that he is a grammarian and as one approaches the end of the *Vākyapadiya*, matters grammatical occupy his attention more and more and the metaphysical and cosmogonic background is forgotten." (1992; 404)[1]

If we compare this passage and Houben's conclusion we find there is a very definite contrast between Iyer's '...gaps in our information...' and Houben's '...rather incomplete and unsatisfactory way.' The former comment, which relates specifically to the absence of details about the creation process, does not entail the latter, which is a general criticism of Bhartrhari linguistic monism as perceived by Houben. Furthermore, Houben misses the opportunity to comment on two pertinent points (certainly pertinent for the present study) thrown up by Iyer in this same passage, namely, that there is a reduction in the attention paid to matters metaphysical and cosmogonic as the *VP* progresses and Bhartrhari conception of creation.

Divisions

To take the first point, Bhartrhari demonstrates the way that language develops into increasing complexity by using the structure of the *VP* itself as a representation. When the divisions within the *VP* are examined we find three *kandas* which have a total content of just under two thousand *kārikās*. These divisions are traditionally named *Brahmakānda*, *Vākyakānda* and *Padakānda* or *Prakirnakānda*. The names of the chapters themselves mirror the transformation into increasing multiplicity, with the *Padakānda* being the only chapter which further divides into subdivisions. I suggest that the first four *kārikās* of *Brahmakanda* provide a concise blueprint, the foundation for the subsequent elaboration which forms the bulk of the *VP*; that the first *kārika* relates, primarily, to the *Brahmakanda*, the second to the *Vākyakanda*, the third, in its multiplicity and analytical nature, to the *Padakānda*, and that the purpose of the fourth is to explain the reasons why the complexities have evolved, i.e. as a result of the primary appearance of the ahamkāra, ego-sense, from *śabdatattva,* and to acknowledge the one con-

[1] Iyer, K, A. Subramania, *Bhartrhari: A Study of the Vākyapadiya in Light of the Ancient Commentaries* (Pune: Deccan Collage, 1992).

stant in all of this; that each of the books of the *VP* reflect one of the three levels of language; that these stanzas reveal the key to the elusive *Śabdapurvayoga* and, as such, justify Bhartrhari's statement that "*tad dvāramapavargasya*" (*cf*., Iyer, 1992; 67).

The *Brahmakanda* is also called *āgamasamuccaya*, a collection of traditions. The first name refers to the discussion of the nature of *Brahman*, which is proclaimed as the origin, and the goal of *śabda.* It is the basic discussion of Brahman in this chapter which builds the foundation for the entire *VP*. However Brahman is, understandably, a recurring theme throughout the work. The third book, for example, while dealing with differentiation and the particulars of language, gives conclusive evidence as to Bhartrhari's real views on the nature of the world. Ultimately there is no separation of the phenomenal world and Brahman for Bhartrhari. The second name refers to the importance of adhering to *āgama* tradition. With reference to this, in the fifth *kārikā*[1], which traditionally completes a *kulaka* with the first four, we are informed that the Veda is the means for the attainment (*prāptyupāya*) of Brahman, and is also a representation (*anukāra*) of it. The great seers are said to have described, variously, what appears to be many paths without detracting from Brahman's true status of One-ness. From this we deduce that the Veda is shown to be the primary example of externalisation of *Śabdabrahman* which, despite the divisions of gross language, and because of the nature of the intuition of the great seers, has retained the ability to act as a true representative of that One, which always remains unaffected by apparent fragmentation and therefore a suitable means for attaining Brahman. It is this *āgama* literature which is the source of all the sciences including Grammar. The Grammar tradition, as handed down in the works of the Munitraya, holds a preeminent position for Bhartrhari. "The later tradition clearly considers all the three sages, i.e. Pānini, Kātyāyana, and Patañjali to be rsis or munis, and the beginning of this process must have already set in by the time of Bhartrhari." (Deshpande, 1997; 113)[2] Grammar is generally held to be the most important of the six auxiliary sciences of the Veda. It

[1] *prāptyupāyo 'nukāraś ca tasya vedo maharsibhih* /
eko 'pi anekavartmeva samāmnātah prthak prthak // (*VP*, 1. 5).

[2] Deshpande, 'The changing notion of sista from Patañjali to Bhartrhari.' in Bhate and Bronkhurst (eds.)
Bhartrhari, Philosopher and Grammarian (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997)

appears from the *VP* (I. 8)[1] that Bhartrhari also acknowledged the views of the various philosophers propounding theories (*smrti*) based on the Veda. This is certainly the stance taken in the body of his work although the Veda's ultimate scriptural authority is confirmed in the *VP* (I. 148) as remaining in 'seed form' even after all human composition has vanished. This, of course, is the state of affairs which one would expect if the Veda is an 'intuited' text. One feels that, for Bhartrhari, the term 'Veda' could be applied to any text which is recited by one who is liberated.

The second chapter, as suggested by its title, deals primarily with the status of the sentence. Bhartrhari discusses and refutes his opponents' ideas on the sentence. For Bhartrhari, the sentence is the sole indivisible reality, it is the bearer of meaning and any subsequent analysis of this unit into words and further into phonemes can be accepted at a lower level only. This view is analogous to his view of *Śabdabrahman* and the unfolded world. Bhartrhari observed that language was more than simply a knowledge of the meaning of words and that the reality of linguistic communication is the indivisible sentence and sentence meaning. On this subject, and certainly in this *kanda*, Bhartrhari disputes and dispatches any view which would confer a reality, independent of the sentence, on the individual word and its meaning. However, having refuted the Mimāmsaka's stance on the reality of the individual word and its meaning, for example, Bhartrhari then accepts what has been rejected at a theoretical level, in practical usage. "The science of Grammar must accommodate itself to all the *darśanas,* because it is common to all of them *(sarvapārsada)."* (Iyer, 1992; 219) Whereas the first *kanda* operates in a polemic free environment, as has previously been noted, in the second *kanda* this is far from the case. Iyer comments that "...in the first *kanda*, the process of the manifestation of the *sphota* by the sound is described in an atmosphere free from polemics...In contrast to all this, in the second *kanda*, there is an atmosphere of polemics." (1992; 182)

The third chapter concentrates on the individual word in its diversity and differentiation as obtained by analysis (*apoddhāra*). Themes such as grammatical categories, the six *kāraka* relations, compound words, denotation of the universal and the particular, gender and number, and each of the powers

[1] *tasyārthavādarūpāni niśritāh svavikalpajāh /*
ekatvinām dvaitinām ca pravādā bahudhā matāh // (*VP*, 1. 8).

of Brahman are given a thorough treatment in their own separate subdivision.[1] As has been stated, this is the only *kanda* which consists of numerous subdivisions. It is larger than the other two put together, and as such still remains incomplete. The particulars are unnecessary for the present short work, suffice to say that the great diversity and differentiation of language which is described in this *kanda* is used by Bhartrhari as an analogy for the great diversity and differentiation visible in the empirical world.

Ashok Aklujkar (1997), in his article "An introduction to the study of Bhartrhari", has written of the difficulty experienced in the various attempts at categorising these three books. He comments that "there is a tendency among the various specialists to view the alternative nomenclature of the three books, *Brahma- kanda*, *Vākya- kanda*, and *Pada- kanda*, as based on content. A little reflection, however, will reveal that *brahma, vākya*, and *pada* do not capture the contents of the three books fully or precisely." It seems clear, however, that the proponents of this view do not make such a simplistic assertion. Aklujkar's above argument seems to have simply missed the point of the analogy.

Certainly this writer, while suggesting there is warrant for such an analysis, would not go so far as to say that the language system can be viewed as a neatly differentiated system which would allow incontrovertible compartmentalisation, despite the apparent trend in some branches of modern linguistics. At the grossest level with increasing analytical complexity, this possibility may appear closer to realisation. Iyer, who is also a supporter of this view based, to an extent, on the content of the chapters, cites the evidence of a concluding stanza of Helārāja's commentary on the third *kanda* of the *VP* to corroborate his view:

> *Nirākānksena vapusā gatā viśvajaninatām /*
> *Trtiyā Vāgavastheyam pratisthām upayātv itah //*
>
> ["Let this third stage of Vāk, having become common to all in its clear unambiguous form, establish itself through this (work of mine)."]

[1] Kālaśakti and creation theory will be discussed below.

Coming at the end of his commentary on the third *kanda* it is valid to conclude that Helārāja is talking about *Vaikhari*, the externalised speech mode, as the object of discussion in this third *kanda,* which is the only one we know he has commented on.

Levels of language

The three levels of language, traditionally accepted by the Grammarians, are mentioned only once in the *VP*, in kārikā 1. 134 [142].[1] This is expanded by a comprehensive description of them in the *Vrtti* on this *kārik*ā.

> *vaikharyā madhyamāyāśca paśyantyāścaitadadbhutam /*
> *anekatirthabhedāyāstrayyā vāca˙ parampadam //*
>
> (*VP* I. 134 [142])
>
> "This (grammar) is the wonderful ultimate abode of the threefold speech which is divided into the various levels *vaikhari, madhyamā* and *paśyanti*."

The *Vrtti*[2] account of these levels is as follows. The first level, which is called *Paśyanti*, is undifferentiated in any way and word and meaning remain without sequence or form. This is the unmanifested *Śabdabrahman*. Later grammarians have suggested there is a higher division of *Paśyanti* which is always beyond verbal manifestation, and which is referred to as *param rupam*. However Punyarāja, who falls into this category of grammarians, seems to offer evidence which contradicts the necessity to posit a higher level of *pasyanti*. Gaurinath Sastri reports that "...Punyarāja himself in course of his elucidation of the text of Bhartrhari on the Eternal Verbum and its manifestations writes to point out that *Pasyanti* is free from all impurities, embraces all and is transcendent." (Sastri, 1959; 69) Unlike the other two levels, there is absolutely no dependence on vital breath. *Pasyanti* is the shining one, ever resplendent in its eternal purity. It is without a beginning and an end and is unchangeable. As we have already seen Brahman

[1] Iyer lists this kārikā as 1. 132, Biardeau and others list it as 1. 142. This is because Iyer has re-classified eight verses as quotations in the Vrtti.
[2] Tradition ascribes authorship of the Vrtti to Bhartrhari himself. In this present work the tradition is accepted.

is described in just this way. Realisation at this level is indeed '*mokśa*' and Ksemendra, in his *Pratyabhijñāhrdaya*, tells us that "...the soul of the grammarian is called *śabdabrahman* or *Paśyanti*.[1] (Sastri, 1959; 69)

As *śabda* moves into the next level, *Madhyamā*, temporal differentiation, albeit only subtly present, allows for the potential formation of a sequence which is associated with *buddhi*. Although still unspoken, the concept is realised at this level as pre-speech in the mind of the speaker, or as post-speech in the mind of the hearer. It is an internal discourse which takes the form of thought. It is speech in its latent form. This level can only exist courtesy of the individual, 'I'. Without this primary thought no differentiation can take place. This thought is always the first to arise and the last to subside. In the Vrtti, under the second *kanda,* Bhartrhari explains that word and meaning are really not different from each other. In reality it is the one Self which appears to divide.[2] The arising of *ahamkāra* creates subjectivity with the prerequisite naming of perceived forms. Initially the split is into *vācaka* and *vācya,* the expressive and the expressed. The first is called *śabda,* the word, and the second is called *artha,* meaning. They are also equated with *kārana*, cause, and *kārya* effect.

This is the beginning of the potentials, mentioned in the opening *kārikās,* becoming active powers. Bhartrhari asserts that powers such as *kālaśakti* (time), *karanaśakti* (causality), *dikśakti* (direction), *sādhanaśakti* (means) and *kriyaśakti* (action) are non-different from Brahman. Each power is discussed in detail in its own section of the third *kanda*. Although they might be considered in some philosophies, such as by the Vaiśesikas, as separately existing entities, in the *VP* they are considered powers of Sabdabrahman. They always appear united in the same object, function together, and have no independent reality at any level of discussion. A multiplicity of powers belonging to the Ultimate reality is admitted in preference to postulating multiple entities. The latter moves too far from the fundamental assertion that Brahman is one.

[1] *śabdabrahmamayam pasyantirūpam ātmatattvam iti vaiyākaranāś śrisadāśivapadam adhyāsitāh*

[2] *ekasyaivātmano bhedau śabdārthavaprthaksthitau*

The primary power, according to the *VP*, is *Kālaśakti*. It is time which allows the appearance of sequence, although all divisions in time remain unreal. Time posits the interval between two states yet no interval can be found. Time itself is possessed of the three powers, past, present, and future,

which are used to explain the transitory phenomena of the universe. Without time practical analysis of grammatical tense would be impossible. According to Helārāja it is this which is important to the Grammarian, and not a philosophical analysis of time.[1] However from a metaphysical perspective, Helārāja informs us that although time is considered to appear first, it is indeed time in combination with space (*ākāśa*) that allows the appearance of *samsāra.* This happens when *Pasyanti,* which is eternally sequenceless, is seen to associate with the *prāna* principle (activity), and as a result appears as though it has sequence. However, *all* differentiation is nescience. At the empirical level, everything is unreal, and without the attainment of true knowledge, Truth remains hidden. Any idea of Creation must be dependent on a sequential progression.[2] Past and present can only be known in relation to the present. Pasyanti is always in the eternal present while the gross expressions of language are confined to the fictions of past and future.

Vaikhari is situated within the physical domain of phonetics and phonology. At this level we can use scientific instrumentation to measure language. Although *prāna* is only subtly present in the previous level here it plays a predominant part. It is this physical function of breath along with all the associated restrictions imposed by physics and the articulatory process that ties speech to the linear order.

The *VP* appears to have been composed as an analogous reference to the Real state of affairs. There is a correlation between the undifferentiated *Brahman*, *Pasyanti*, and the first *kanda*; between the indivisible sentence with meaning, *Madhyamā*, and the second *kanda*; and between the sentence analysed into words, *Vaikhari* and the third *kanda*.

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[1] *nāsmābhirdarāanaviveka˙ prārabdha˙*

[2] The fundamental difference between the Indian Grammarian's model of the language system and that of the Western linguist is the latter's primary acceptance of word order, even at the most abstract level.

Sphota Theory and Pratibhā

Bhartrhari has described *pratibhā* as the meaning-whole of the sentence, which is perceived as an instantaneous flash of intuition. Complete understanding in the blink of an eye. It has nothing to do with reason per se and yet reason can point to it. Although the meanings of the individual words contribute to the 'flash' it is quite different from them and can occur before an utterance is completed. It is the experience of the individual of reality, as it is. Each and every individual uniquely interprets the experience of *pratibhā*. Words can be used to describe it but can not make a true representation of it. It is essentially the necessary contribution of the inner self, in the form of intuition, to the complete and indivisible sentence meaning. Bhartrhari writes:

> *śabdeśvevāśritā śaktir viśvasyāsya nibandhani /*
> *yannetrah pratibhātmāyam bhedarupah pratiyate //*
>
> (*VP*, 1. 118)[1]
>
> ["The power which resides in words is the sole cause of this universe. Led by that intuitive self, this appearance of division is recognised."]

Pratibhā is innate in all living beings. It is the reason that the natural behaviour of birds and animals takes place without instruction or any other prompting. It is the reason the Indian cuckoo sings in spring, for example.[2] In human beings it is even recognised in the newborn child whose dispositions are carried over from a previous birth.[3] This is an interesting remark coming 1500 years before Noam Chomsky posited his 'revolutionary' innateness theory which attempts to explain the reason a child can develop speech with relatively poor input from their immediate environment. On this very point Bhartrhari challenges the *Mimāmsakas* who had deduced that

[1] Numbering accords to Biardeau's Vākyapadiya Brahmakānda. Houben lists this kārikā as 1. 122.
[2] *svaravrttim vikurute madhau pumskokilasya kah* / (*VP*, 2. 149a, Iyer's numbering).
[3] *yām purvāhitasamskāro bālo 'pi pratipadyate* // (*VP*, 2. 129b, Houben's numbering).

children merely learn the meanings of individual words from the usage of their elders, by agreement, by difference and by elimination.

The modern argument, similar to that of the *Mimāmsakas*, attempts to account for language acquisition.[1] In this, Universal Grammar[2] limits its concern to the core grammar only, to grammatical rather than pragmatic aspects. It claims that it is impossible to learn the principles of UG through social interaction. This obviously presents UG with a problem: how to explain where language comes from? The modern opponents of this theory attempt to deny the poverty-of-the-stimulus argument but this attempt must be unsuccessful as long as any known aspect of language is not deemed to be acquired from the environment. Chomsky comments, while pondering Plato's problem regarding rich and specific knowledge coming from meager evidence, that "...the solution to Plato's problem must be based on ascribing the fixed principles of language faculty to the human organism as part of its biological endowment." (Chomsky, 1998; 27)[3] At first glance, Plato's own solution corresponds with that of Bhartrhari. He calls upon memories of previous existence. Unfortunately this would be an unthinkable solution for a Western linguist steeped in the empirical conventions of his culture. Within the context of the *VP* this solution is accepted at a lower level of analysis, from the point of view of the individual, while a modern perspective might simply highlight that: "Positive evidence alone is insufficient to acquire the principles of UG. The alternatives to innateness are insufficient because they rely on positive evidence, or they occur too rarely or too inconsistently, or they cannot explain creativity, or they cannot handle the type of knowledge that is acquired." (Cook and Newson, 1996; 102).

Iyer has this same problem in mind when he suggests that while Bhartrhari "...asserts that the child is born with *śabdabhāvanā* which is obviously not the knowledge of any language, he does not say how ultimately it learns the language or how the original *śabdabhāvanā* is transformed into knowledge of a particular language as the child grows up." (Iyer, 1992; 404) However it seems that it is unnecessary for Bhartrhari to go any further than he has

[1] cf. Bruner, 1983
[2] Chomsky's term 'Universal Grammar' referred to hereafter as 'UG'.
[3] In Cook, V. J., & Newson, Mark, *Chomsky's Universal Grammar*, (Oxford: Blackwell 1996).

already done. While his account is remarkably similar to that of modern Linguistics I see no reason to saddle Bhartrhari with a twentieth century empirical mentality. Bhartrhari suggests that it is the child's own *pratibhā* in the form of *śabdabhāvanā* which enables him to relearn, or remember. *Śabdabhāvanā* is eternal and the residual trace of the use of words which has remained over from a previous birth will soon trigger as the intuition. Bhartrhari thereby posits a less distant approach to language in general in that he starts language from a less multifarious level, namely the level of intuition. Language is about remembrance of something already known and not about actively reasoning a varied system. Further, there is no question that for the child, as for the adult, it is the sentence that is meaning bearing, not the elements within the sentence, which are merely convenient fictions. Learning is therefore situated at the higher level of the sentence, or meaning-bearing unit, rather than at the level of contrived analysis. The complexities of the individual words and phonemes are lost within the larger intuitive element. It would appear that Bhartrhari is advocating a holistic, conceptual element to language acquisition. The nuts and bolts might be pulled out and examined later, but in the beginning all that is required is the model as a whole.

Creation Theory in the *VP*

Any Creation theory offered by Bhartrhari, as we shall see, will be entirely dependent on language. As Iyer notes, "Bhartrhari does want to connect his explanation of the Sanskrit language or of language in general with his metaphysical background. It is not an accident that a work which is supposed to deal with the sentence and the word begins with a statement on *Brahman,* the Ultimate Reality." (1992; 123)

> "Nothing whatever is brought into existence, whether from itself or from something else: nothing at all! Not anything existent, non-existent, or both is ever originated. Further a cause is not born from something that is itself beginningless, nor can an effect arise simply by its own power. Whatever has no beginning is obviously also without a cause. Our naming of things depends on an objective stimulus [observer and observed must both exist or neither does]. For this reason, and because of the

> experience of bondage to ignorance, some base their philosophy on an acceptance of real objects. Empirical observation supports the idea that knowledge is stimulated by an objective cause, but a true perception of things sustains the view that there is no genuine cause." (Trans. Fox, 1993; 83 vs. 22-25)[1]

The above section from Gaudapāda's '*Alātaśānti-Prakarana*' is a delineation of *ajātavāda*, the theory of non-origination, which denies that the creation of the world ever happened and affirms that, in absolute terms, it is an uncaused appearance. This theory is often attacked because it is said to deny the reality of the world. This is not the case. In this theory the world must be real because it partakes of the Being-ness of the one Self, unconditioned, unborn and non-dual. It is an affirmation, rather than a denial, of Reality. However, to see the world as a separate reality is denied.

In the *VP* (1. 1) Bhartrhari describes Brahman as "*anādinidhanam*", without a beginning and an end, and also as "*akśaram,"* imperishable or unchanging, while at the same time describing the world-process as unfolding from it through an apparent transformation into objects. The apparent contradiction is in fact in full agreement with the quote from Gaudapāda, given above. The verb form *vivartate*, which is used in this first *kārikā*, is explained in the *vrtti* in terms of the concept *vivarta*. Iyer notes that the *Vrtti* "...defines *vivarta* as 'the assumption by the One, without losing its One-ness, through apparent diversity, of separate unreal forms.'" (1992; 135)[2]

As is well known the concept of *vivarta* has become associated, to a significant extent, with the later *Atmādvaita* or *Advaita Vedānta* of Sankara. However there is much confusion amongst commentators as to whether Bhartrhari himself favours *vivartavāda* or *parināmavāda* and indeed whether he recognised a distinction between the two. *Vivartavāda* is, in essence, the theory of appearances. The classic example which might be given is that of the snake in the rope. The appearance 'snake' is dependent on the reality of the rope without 'snake' having any substance at any time, and without the rope changing in any way. In other words the rope is the 'apparent' cause

[1] Fox, Dougas, A., *Dispelling Illusion*, (Delhi: Sri Satguru, 1993).
[2] *ekasya tattvādapracyutasya bhedānukārenāsatyavibhaktānyarupopagrāhitā vivartah* / (from the Vrtti for the *VP* 1).

which manifests the appearance of the snake as an 'apparent' effect while always remaining as it is. On the other hand *parināmavāda* declares that the cause transforms itself into its effect. An appropriate example would be milk transforming into curds. In such an instance there is an irreversible material transformation. This process must be a one way process and this is the very evidence which might help us to discover which theory Bhartr□hari could logically support based on his own words. Iyer reports that even as far back as the 8th century C.E. both of these theories were given serious consideration as belonging to Bhartrhari. Sanraksita, the Buddhist philosopher, along with his commentator, Kamalasila, when commenting on the first kārikā of the *VP*, interprets it in two ways. At a time "...when Bhartrhari's authorship of the Vrtti was taken for granted ... in his first interpretation, he deliberately uses the word parināma, or 'real manifestation', to explain the word *vivartate* occurring in it ... In the second interpretation, it is stated that the *Brahman* which is always without any differentiation is looked upon by the world as differentiated because of *avidyā*" (Iyer, 1992; 129). It must be noted however that these Buddhist commentators had reason to create difficulties of interpretation in order to propound their own theories.

Jayantabhatta in his *Nyayamanjari* gives four interpretations of *vivarta* as it relates to Bhartrhari's *Sabdabrahman.* Two of them are essentially similar to the descriptions given above for *vivartavāda* and *parināmavāda*. The third understands *vivarta* as an 'unreal representation' without direct reference to objective reality, like a magician's trick. The fourth would make *Sabdabrahman* the creative principle. Needless to say, Jayanta also wished to dispute Bhartrhari's views. And what better way than to create division and indecision within the Grammarian's *VP*? However Gaurinath Sastri notes that "...we know it for certain that during the time of Jayantabhatta the most authoritative school would explain it in the light of *vivarta* meaning formal transformation, for it is this view of *vivarta* which Jayantabhatta has selected to criticize as the view of the grammarian." (Sastri, 1959; 57)[1] It should be noticed however that Jayanta's four definitions are quite simply manufactured, pedantically, from the two basic definitions, *vivartavāda* and *parināmavāda*, listed above.

[1] Sastri, G., *A Study of the Dialectics of Sphota*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998)

Bhartrhari is specific - even if his commentators are not - that change in any real sense is impossible. In his discussion of universals, he makes a comment that has wider implications for his philosophy as a whole.

> *ātmalābhasya janmākhyā satālabhyam ca labhyate /*
> *yadi saj jāyate kasmād athāsaj jāyate katham //*
>
> (*VP*, 3. 3; 43)
>
> ["If obtaining individuality is called 'birth', and existence which is obtainable is obtained, then from what is existence produced, and if non-existent how is it produced?"]

The underlying concept bears a remarkable similarity to that found in verse four of Gaudapāda's "*Alātaśānti*": "No existent can come to birth, and certainly no non-existent can begin to exist. So disputants, by their mutual contradiction, affirm non-origination." (Trans., Fox, 1993). Bhartrhari also points out the futility of the 'being versus non-being' controversy which, in the ultimate analysis, leaves the disputants far from the One Truth. He comments:

> *tasmāt sarvam abhāvo vā bhāvo vā sarvam isyate /*
> *na tv avasthāntaram kim cid ekasmāt satyatah sthitam //*
>
> (*VP*, 3, 3; 63)
>
> ["Therefore everything is considered to be either non-existence or existence. But (in reality) no other state remains than the One Truth."]

One assumes this is a comment exposing the misunderstandings of thinkers of the time including the Mimāmsakas, Vaiśesikas, Naiyāyikas and Bauddhas. It is certainly an affirmation of ultimate reality. An affirmation which leaves the representative, opposite terms *bhāva* and *abhāva* redundant. Neither one can exist independently of the other, and each is used as reference in order to describe the other. Similarly, with regard to identity (*ekatva*) and difference (*nānātva*), Helārāja has commented that "the establishment of one cannot be maintained without the necessary establishment

of the other."[1] This mutual dependence negates, absolutely, any independent reality for either.

Undoubtedly similarities can be seen between Bhartrhari's discussions of being, non-being, identity and difference and Mådhyamika doctrine. However, in the Mādhyamika school of thought it has been deduced, through infinite regress, that since all things are established in a relationship of mutual dependency they are empty (*śunya*) of real nature. On this point, and based on his conclusion that Bhartrhari rejects multiplicity, Nakamura notes that discussions "...from the *Vākyapadiya* related to the opposition of being and non-being as well as identity and difference were most probably the result of the influence of Mādhyamika thought." (1970; 141)[2] This would seem to be a valid point only if we are maintaining that it is the dialectal structure, which is 'the result of the influence of Mādhyamika thought', and not the substance of the argument and ultimate conclusion found within the *VP*. In establishing the fundamental principle of *pratityasamutpada*[3], Nagārjuna effectively argued that any relation of mutual dependency entails that in the event that one does not exist, the other must not exist either. Matilal has summed up Nagarjuna's theory of interdependence as follows:

> "If we assume any object *x* to be independently existent, then either we cannot give any consistent (rational) account of that object, by which we can avoid logical contradiction, or our assumption of its independent existence will lead to some absurd consequence which will run counter to our experience." (1971; 148)

Bhartrhari's argument, within the *VP*, is formed in similar fashion to the Buddhist dialectic. However his approach is firmly rooted in the tenets laid down by the Upanisadic seers. Brahman is *eka,* and does not change, yet through the auspices of *kālaśakti* it is conceded that the differentiated world emanates. Right at the beginning of the *VP*, in the second *kārikā*, Bhartrhari tells us that although Brahman is "celebrated as neither more nor less than

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[1] *ekāsiddhāvitarāsiddhiprasangah*

[2] Nakamura, H., *The Concept of Brahman in Bhartrhari's Philosophy*, (Madras: Journal of Oriental Studies 1970).

[3] dependent origination

One, (it) becomes fragmented because of recourse to (its denotating) potentiality. Although undifferentiated, it behaves as if differentiated because of its (denotative) potentials."[1] In the sixth chapter of the Chāndogya Upanisad the same understanding is explained in a typically Upanisadic manner.

> *yenāśrutaµ śrutaµ bhavatyamatam matamavijñātam*
> *vijñātamiti katham nu bhagavah sa ādeśo bhavatiti* // 6. 1. 3 /
>
> ["O venerated sir, what is that instruction through which the unheard becomes heard, the unthought of becomes thought, the unknown becomes known?"]
>
> *yathā somyai kena mrtpindena sarvam mrnmayam vijñātam*
> *syādvācārambhanam vikāro nāmadheyam mrttiketyeva*
> *satyam // 6. 1. 4 /*
>
> ["O gentle sir, as by knowing a lump of earth everything made of earth becomes known, the transformation begins with speech. It is name only. In fact, 'earth' is the reality."]

The basis of this sentiment is mirrored in the first kārikā of the *VP*. "Brahman, which is without a beginning and an end, the essence of language, the imperishable, from which the world-process 'appears to unfold' through a transformation into objects." This is the heart of Bhartrhari's philosophy. The essence of language is Brahman and it is through this language that 'naming' takes place. Brahman names Brahman. For example, when I talk about 'my' hand I do not have to sever it first, although in giving it a denotation I impose a certain otherness to it. Similarly Brahman neither changes nor divides when it is named. Even the name used is Brahman, *aksara*, the imperishable syllable, in the ultimate analysis known as 'OM'.

It was earlier noted that Iyer had pointed to "...gaps in our information relating to the details of the process of the manifestation of the cosmos from the Brahman-Śabdatattva and of its merging into it." Perhaps this stanza will help.

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[1] Bearing in mind this is a Linguistic work written by a Grammarian it seems legitimate to translate *śakti* as denotative potential/power. The full force of Bhartrhari's intention can then at last be seen. (cf. *A Dictionary of Sanskrit Grammar*, (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1986).

na so 'sti pratyayo loke yah śabdānugamād rte /
anuviddham iva jñānam sarvam śabdena bhāsate //

["In this world, there is no cognition which does not follow language. All knowledge appears as if permeated by words."]

Apabhramśa (corrupt terminology)

The term *apabhramśa* is, on the face of it, problematic in the *VP*. There appear to be two distinct operations which lead to the 'fall', brought on by use of *apabhramßa* terminology. These two operations are restricted to their own respective levels of abstraction. The underlying concept is that a corrupt form can only be considered so with regard to an original correct form. The immediate problem we experience is that of the Ultimate nature of language. If it is the case that *śabda* originates from *Brahman* then everything from the *madhyamā* level through to *vaikhari* must in the ultimate analysis be considered *apabhramśa*, if considered independently real. In the first *kanda* it is revealed that it is not only the physical form of the speech which can be 'fallen' but also the meaning which might be associated with a given form. If one pronounces the syllables correctly but without understanding the meaning then this is *apabhramśa*. Or for that matter if one mispronounces a form but with the correct meaning in mind this is still *apabhramśa* because the corrupt form had to first stimulate the correct form in order to reveal the true meaning. It is possible to communicate meaning with either the correct or the incorrect forms with the proviso that the incorrect forms will not lead the speaker to spiritual merit.

śistebhya āgamāt siddhāh sādhavo dharmasādhanam /
arthapratyāyanābhede vipartās tv asādhavah //

(VP, 1. 27)

["The correct forms received from the cultured through tradition, are the means of obtaining dharma. The incorrect forms, although not different in meaning expressed, are the opposite. (i.e. they do not lead to dharma)"]

On the one hand we have corruption due to incorrect pronunciation of syllables and or misunderstanding of meaning, this is the form which normally

receives notice, on the other hand there is corruption of the original, undifferentiated *Sabdabrahman* as soon as *Kālaśakti* operates and the *paśyanti* level of speech is left. Effectively, if Brahman is not brought to mind there is differentiation. What is Bhartrhari's point? Is he really talking about a prescriptive grammar? I hypothesise that this is not the case. Such a suggestion does not sit well with the rest of the *VP*. There are clearly two fruits that can be attained through Grammar.

The first comes with the use of chaste forms of speech and leads one, through merit (*dharma*) to heaven. This doctrine is an inheritance carried over from the *Munitraya*, *Pānini*, *Kātyāyana*, and *Patañjali*. Of the Three, it is *Patañjali* who was most concerned with the perceived drift from 'correct' forms. Bhartrhari is adamant that tradition should be upheld, and it is only with reference to the *āgamas* that this can be fulfilled. The important point seems to be that without adhering to tradition, and the *śistas* who transmit it, there is a danger of 'falling' (*apabhramśa*) into an ego-oriented invention which is then set up as spiritual truth. Surrendering to the word of those great seers who have gone before hampers the ego's potential for doing harm. It should, of course, be noted, that it can not be Bhartrhari's intention to advocate mere scriptural learning without an experiential element. The conversations of Śvetaketu and his father in the Chandogya Upanisad once again come to mind.[1]

The second fruit is a new revelation from Bhartrhari himself. It comes through an understanding of the true nature of language and the subsequent liberation (*moksa*), which naturally pertains to such understanding. In the ultimate analysis all words refer to *Brahman*, as *Sabdabrahman*. This appears to be the force of the following kārikā, which we will return to in the next section.

> *tasmād yah śabdasamskārah sā siddhih paramātmanah /*
> *tasya pravrttitattvajñas tad brahmāmrtam aśnute //*
>
> *(VP 1. 131)*

[1] Chapter 6.

["Therefore that which purifies the word is attainment of the Supreme Self. He, who knows the truth of its origin, attains the immortal Brahman."]

The fact is that all of the discussion in the *VP* is undertaken for one purpose. That purpose is realisation of the true nature of the word. That nature is eternally undifferentiated.

Atma Vicāra (*Sabdapurvayoga*)

api prayoktur ātmānaμ śabdam antaravasthitam /
prāhur mahāntam rsabham yena sāyujyam isyate //

tasmād yah śabdasamskārah sā siddhih paramātmanah /
tasya pravrttitattvajñas tad brahmāmrtam aśnute //

(VP, 1. 130-131)

["It is also said that the self of the speaker is, the word situated within, the Great Bull with whom one desires union. Therefore that which purifies the word is attainment of the Supreme Self. He who knows the truth of its origin attains the immortal Brahman."]

The vrtti under kārikā (1. 130) gives a further gloss which states that this Great 'Word'-Bull is the Lord of all, endowed with all powers, and that those who know this *vāgyoga* break the knot of *ahamkāra,* and are merged into it with complete absence of differentiation.[1] The Lord of all endowed with all powers is of course Sabdabrahman. Sabdabrahman, as the sole reality, is none other than our own Self. Sporting in the region of objects however, He gives the impression of separateness. Internal and external are mutually dependent terms and as such their reality must be questioned. "Who is it who wishes union with whom?" The true nature of the purification of words is given here. Once the Supreme Self is known, there is no danger of *apabhramśa*.

[1] *sarveśvarah sarvaśaktirmahān śabdavrsabhah* / *tasmin khalu vāgyogavido vichchinnahamkaragranthin atyantavinirbhāgena samsrjyante* /

There are ten concepts for attaining Brahman mentioned in the Vrtti on the *VP* (1., 5). These are linked to the techniques of *Sabdapurvayoga.* Iyer, along with others, has expressed doubt as to whether these are "...ten different conceptions of moksa or ten different aspects of the Grammarian's concept of moksa. (Iyer, 1992; 139) It seems clear however that these are indeed Bhartrhari's own ideas which all have the common theme of attainment of the Supreme Self as their substance. The first is a straightforward statement to the effect that one who desires liberation must cut the knot (*granthi*) of the ego (*ahamkāra*). The rest are simply re-statements of this primary one. They speak of merging with the Original Source, withdrawal of the senses from their objects, inner joy without the aid of external means, knowing nothing except the Self, desiring nothing but the Self, interest in the inner Self, possession of all powers, non-intervention of time in the individual self, and finally negation of self.

There has been concern about two of these, 'possession of all powers' and 'negation of self.' There is no need for the concern. The possession of all powers is synonymous with being *Brahman*. The problem has arisen through a misunderstanding as to which powers were being alluded to. If it is the eight powers of *Yoga* then certainly one might have doubts. Clearly, it is the powers mentioned in the second *kārikā* of the first *kanda* and subsequently explained in the third *kanda* which are meant. To consider anything else would give no cohesion to the text of the *VP*. As regards 'negation of self' it has been said that this goes against the affirmation of the Self in other statements. However if we look at the statement regarding non-intervention of time and the 'individual self' we realise there is a straightforward explanation. Negation of self is synonymous with negation of *ahamkåra*, the ego-self. By tracing this to its source, the ego-self is found to be non-existent and in its place the Real Self shines resplendent.

Sabdapurvayoga is the return to that state which is prior to the arising of the ego. Bhartrhari's method of attaining the Self is clearly a tracing back of the mind to its source. At that point the unreality of the ego is discovered. This is the true purification of the word. When Brahman is known to be all there is, there can no longer be any misunderstanding. Some commentators have attributed the later ideas of avidyā or māya to Bhartrhari equating it with *kālaśakti* in his scheme of things. This avidyā has never existed. Looking

for it is like a person waking from a dream attempting to finish the glass of water he had been drinking in the dream.

Conclusion

Bhartrhari has stated that Grammar is the straight road for those who would attain liberation in Brahman.[1] The twentieth century Sage of Arunācala, Ramana Maharsi, a proponent of *ajātavāda,* similarly referred to the discipline of *ātmavicāra* as the straight path to Self-realisation. As we have seen the essence of Bhartrhari's method is indeed *ātmavicāra*. Bhartrhari's insistence that any appearance of parts is simply a fiction, at all levels of the language system, mark him as an uncompromising non-dualist. This analysis may at times be considered by some as beyond reason and this is an important point. *Buddhi* stands at the doorway to liberation. Turning one way *buddhi, "*in the form of the enjoyer, that which is enjoyed, and the enjoyment," wanders, discriminates and rationalises a sequential description of the empirical worldview. Multiple views dependent on *ahamkåra* are then observed. "Although undifferentiated it (*Brahman*) behaves as if differentiated because of its (denotative) potentials." Turning the other way *buddhi* stops dead in its tracks and Brahman shines forth in undifferentiated splendor as always. His philosophy does not negate the empirical world but rather returns it to its rightful place as an uncaused appearance in Brahman. In this his philosophy is synonymous with that of the *ajātavādin.*

Although long held to be one, it is only in the *VP* that Bhartrhari has truly raised this science of *Vyākarana* to the level of a darśana. His philosophy of *sabdādvaita* accepts the statements of the grammarians who have gone before but his insistence that grammar is a doorway to *moksa* lifts it to a level previously unseen. I started by suggesting that the scholar has a problem with this concept and finish in similar vein. The empirical mentality has swept this globe brushing aside all it encounters. Houben has trivialised Bhartrhari's soteriological statements and swept them aside with the uninformed comment that, "*If at all costs* one wants to see the *VP* as a work contributing to *moksa* 'liberation' it is not because an exclusive meditative practice (such as *sabdapurvayoga*) is advocated in it, but because it contains a wealth of viewpoints and suggestions which stimulate independent reflec-

[1] "*... tad vyākaranam āgamya param brahmādhigamyate*" (*VP*; 1. 22).

tion on the relation between language, thought and reality" (Houben, 1995; 282., *my emphasis*). This is, of course, the very point that Bhartrhari is making throughout the *VP*. There is no 'at all costs' about it. There is no separation between the empirical world and 'liberation'. The user of language can experience the non-dual reality by knowing the truth of its origin. To view the *VP* in any other light is to miss its unique perspective.

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Glossary

abhimana: attachment; self-conceit; pride

abhyasa: practice

acharya: teacher

Adiguru: first Guru

Advaita: non-duality, unique; a school of philosophy

Advaita Vedanta: philosophy of non-duality

Advaitin: follower *of Advaita Vedanta*

aham: I

aham Brahmasmi: mahavakya: "I am Brahman."

ahamkara: the 'I'-maker; ego-self; self-consciousness; concept of individuality

ajatavata: the doctrine of non-origination or the theory of no creation

ajatavadin: an adherent of the doctrine of *ajatavada*

ajnani: the ignorant, one who has not realized the Self

amrita: blissful; immortal

ananda: bliss; happiness; one of the three attributes of the Self (*sat, cit, ananda* – Being, Consciousness and Bliss)

apabhramsa: fallen word; corrupt form

Arjuna: disciple of *Krishna*

arupa: formless

asana: sitting posture, seat

Atma(n): Self; *Brahman*; the Absolute

atmanishtha: abidance in the Self

atma vidya: knowledge of the Self

(atma) vichara: Self Enquiry

Avadhuta: Dattatreya, is a paradigmatic *sannyasi* (monk) and one of the lords of yoga, venerated as a Hindu god

avatar: incarnation of God

avidya: ignorance

bandha hetuh: cause of bondage

Bhagavad Gita, Gita: (lit. 'God's song'), part of the epic *Mahabharata*, dialog between *Krishna* and *Arjuna*

Bhagavan: Lord, God, *Krishna*, Ramana

bhajan: devotional song

bhakta: devotee

bhakti: devotion

Bhakti Marga: path of devotion

Bharata: here: *Arjuna*

Bhashya: commentary, exposition

Bhaskara: Indian philosopher, 8th/9.th century

bhavana: idea

bhoga hetuh: cause of pleasure

bindu: point, dot, drop, essence

brahmacharya: (traditionally) celibacy; here it is used in the sense of 'complete occupation with *Brahman'*

brahma nadi: Nadis are subtle nerves (channels) described in Yoga texts; *brahma nadi*, also referred as *amrtanadi*, is the innermost channel which is blissful and is, indeed, the Self.

Brahman: the Supreme Being, the Absolute

buddhi: mind

chakras: energy centre

chit (cit): consciousness

chitta: memory, mind

Dakshinamurti: Shiva as teacher

dama: self-control

darshan(a): sight, vision

Dattatreya: a paradigmatic *sannyasi* (monk) and one of the lords of yoga

dharma: duty, righteousness, cosmic order, law, the 'right way of living'

dhyana: meditation

diksha: initiation by the guru

dvaita: duality; duplicity; a school of philosophy

eka chintana: one thought

Gaudapada: ca. 6th century, philosopher and scholar of the *Advaita Vedanta* school

ghee: clarified butter

gnani: jnani

gopis: cowherd girls in Vraja, who possessed devotion for *Krishna*

gunas: the three fundamental qualities, tendencies

harikatha: an ancient traditional art form of India that combines storytelling, music, dance, and spiritual philosophy

hridaya(m): this is the centre, heart

Indra: God, king of the gods

ishta devata: the deity chosen for worship or contemplation

Isvara: Lord, God

jada: inert

japa: repetition of a *mantra* or sacred words such as 'om namo bhagavate sri ramanaya' under one's breath

jiva: the embodied self

jivanmukta: one who is liberated even when he is alive

jivatman: individual soul

jnana: knowledge

Jana Marga: the path of knowledge

Janaka, king: famous and wise king in the Ramayana

jnani: knower of the Self; Sage

karika: A *kArikA* is a verse which explains grammatical rules or indeed grammar in general. It also refers to a memorial verse; or more generally 'activity' or 'torment'

karma: action; work; fruit of work

Karma Marga: path of *karma* (action)

kartr: one who acts

koham: Who am I?

Krishna: eight Incarnation of *Vishnu*, God

kriya: practice

kriyayoga: spontaneous action; abidance in the Self during everyday life

kumbhaka: retention of breath

kundalini: the yogic power as serpent, which traverses the yogic centres of the body; the Self

Kurma: lit.: tortoise, *avatar* of *Vishnu*

laya: dissolution

loka vichara: world-fascination

Mahabharata: Hindu epic

Madhvacharya: founder of the *Dvaita* school of *Vedanta* philosophy

mahasamadhi: death, final absorbtion in the Self

Mahatma: great soul, venerable

mahavakyas: "The Great Sayings" of the Upanishads

manana: thinking over what has been heard

manas: mind

manolaya: sluggish, inactive mind, lulling oneself

*manonasa: d*estruction of the mind

mantra(m): sacred word; sacred text; incantation

marga: path

maya: illusion

moksha: liberation

mukti: liberation

mumukshu: a person who has an intense desire for liberation (*moksha*)

nada: sound, vibration

nadi: nerve

nama: name; name of God; the separation/creation of the world by the individual (the naming game)

namaskara: prostration before God or Guru, surrender of the ego

Narada: the Sage who composed Narada Bhakti Sutras

Nathyoga: Yoga-tradition of Shivaism

neti, neti: not this, not that; method of negation

nididhyasana: the last of the three stages of vedantic realisation; uninterrupted contemplation

nirguna: without attributes

nirvana: liberation

nirvikalpa: free from distinctions

niyama: natural laws

omkara: the sacred sound OM

pakva: fitness; maturity

pandit: scholar

paramatman: the Self

pasyanti: the shining one; the first stage of speech

pramana: proof

prana: life force; breath; energy

pranam: reverential salutation involving bowing or prostration

pranava: the mystic sound of om

pranayama: regulation of breathing

prajna: highest and purest form of wisdom

prapatti: surrender

prayatna: effort

puja: ceremonial worship with various paraphernalia

puraka: inhalation

purna(m): complete, full

purusha: man; God

Purva Karma: the doctrine of the Purva Mimamsas. They follow the Karma Kanda of the *Veda* and are solely concerned with correct action in accordance with *dharma* (the order of the universe).

rajas: one of the three *gunas*, the principle of activity

Ramanuja: Hindu philosopher

rasa: bliss

rechaka: exhalation

ripus: enemies

rshi, rishi: a seer, a sage

Rudra: vedic deity associated with *Shiva*

sabda: sound, word

Sabdabrahman: unmanifest word; *Brahman*; Om; *pasyanti*

Sabdapurvayoga: a method of tracing the mind back to its source; union with that which is before words, *atma vichara*

Sadguru, Sat-guru: true teacher

sadhaka: a spiritual aspirant, one who follows a spiritual discipline

sadhana: spiritual practice

sadhu: ascetic, sage

sahaja: natural; the natural state

sahaja sthiti: full and lasting knowledge of the Self

sakshi: witness

sakta: worshipper of *sakti*

sakti, shakti: power; potential

sama: equal, common

samadhi: state of awareness; bringing into harmony; trance

samsara: the cycle of births and deaths

samskara: innate tendency

sangham: union or coming together

Sankara: (8th c. CE), Indian scholar-monk, philosopher, and teacher (*acharya*) of *Advaita Vedanta*

sannyasa: complete renunciation

sannyasi: religious ascetic, monk

saram: nectar; essence

sastra: scripture, science, precept

sat: reality

saccidananda: existence, consciousness and bliss, the nature of *Brahman*

satsang: association with the wise

sattva: pure

Shiva, Siva: supreme Lord, God of destruction (of the ego)

siddha: the perfect

siddhi: supernatural powers

sishya: disciple

Siva Sakti: power of *Siva*

so'ham: sah aham, I am He

sphurana: the indefinable but palpable manifestation of the Self, which is felt at times all over but ultimately in the Heart centre

sravana: hearing of the truth from the Guru

Srimad Bhagavatam: central text in Vaishnavism

sruti note: The *shruti* is the smallest interval of pitch that the human ear can detect and a singer or musical instrument can produce.

suddha: pure

sushumna nadi: central energy channel in the human subtle body

sushupti: dreamless sleep

sutra: string; aphorism

svabhava: one's own state of being; innateness; nature

svarupa: own form; nature; essence

Svetaketu: a sage mentioned in the Chandogya Upanishad

tamas, tamoguna: darkness, ignorance, the principle of inertia

tapas: austerity

tat tvam asi: You are That (the Truth)

turiya: the fourth state, which transcends the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep and is their basis

upadesa: spiritual instruction

Upadesa Saram: Nectar/Essence of Spiritual Instruction

upadhi: limitation; limiting adjunct

Upanishads: Sanskrit texts of the late Vedic and post-Vedic periods

upasana: remaining close by; divine service; complete worship; worship of the Lord in His eightfold form

vada: doctrine, philosophical theory

vairagya: detachment, dispassion

vak: speech, word

vasana: habit; latent tendencies; mindstuff

Vasudeva: God of Gods

Veda: religious scriptures

vichara: enquiry

vicharin: one who practises *vichara*

vidya: knowledge

vihara: separation

vijnana: consciousness, understanding

Vishnu: God of preservation

viyoga: separation

vritti: the function of the mind

Vyasa: ancient Indian sage, traditionally regarded as the author of the epic Mahabharata

yoga: union (of *jiva* with *Brahman*); method; practice

Yoga Marga: path of Yoga

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